

MARIA CANTWELL
WASHINGTON



United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4705

May 12, 2020

The Honorable Elaine L. Chao
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue Southeast
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Secretary Chao:

I am writing in support of the City of Ridgefield's application to the Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) grant for the Pioneer Street Extension Project. The City is seeking \$5,812,000 to expand and extend Pioneer Street into the Ridgefield Junction and will provide \$1,700,000 (22%) in local matching funds to the total project cost of \$7,512,000 million.

As a result of rising housing costs in nearby Portland, Oregon, Ridgefield has been the fastest growing community in the state of Washington in 2013, 2014, 2016 and 2019. According to U.S. Census data, Ridgefield has grown 65 percent since 2010 and the City has seen 1,100 new homes built since 2014. A further 2,500 homes are set to be built by 2024. Large developments in the area have also added to the City's growth, including the recently completed Cowlitz Indian Tribe's \$510 million casino approximately two miles to the north of the project site.

Ridgefield's economic development capacity is limited by insufficient access to employment centers, preventing the City from growing an employment base for Ridgefield residents and the region. According to the City, the Pioneer Street Extension Project will attract higher levels of private investment to underutilized land, provide access to Clark College's new campus, and increase the efficiency and safety of vehicle and truck freight. This will significantly improve economic development capacity, including access to 820 acres of underutilized employment land that the City estimates will create over 8,000 permanent jobs.

This project will also address a significant safety issue in the Ridgefield Junction. Currently, the area's vehicle and freight traffic must use two roads that are not designed for high volume or freight traffic to access the underutilized Union Ridge business park. The existing roads are failing from the heavy truck traffic and are narrowing, forcing trucks to use a portion of the on-coming lane when navigating the corner between South 65th and South 5th, creating a dangerous environment for travelers. Linking the 65th roundabout and I-5 Junction to create a major arterial road will significantly increase public safety while reducing the costs accrued from accidents around the I-5 Junction.

Thank you for your consideration of the City of Ridgefield's application.

Sincerely,

Maria Cantwell
United States Senator