

MARIA CANTWELL  
WASHINGTON



United States Senate  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4705

October 4, 2022

Nuria Fernandez  
Federal Transit Administration  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE  
Washington, DC 20590-0001

Dear Administrator Fernandez,

I am writing in support of an application submitted by the City of Seattle to the FY22 All Stations Accessibility Program for the Seattle Center Monorail Reconfiguration project. The City is applying for \$15 million in FTA funds to reconfigure the Seattle Center Monorail Station above current ADA standards to provide full access to persons with disabilities.

Seattle Center Monorail is the nation's first full-scale commercial monorail system built in 1962 and a beloved Seattle landmark. The Monorail provides a fun, quick, and convenient link between downtown Seattle and Seattle Center. Seattle Center is a treasured hub for arts and culture, sports, and community gatherings – exceptional events, experiences, and environments which delight and inspire the human spirit. Seattle Center's 74-acre campus is home to more than 30 arts & culture, sports, entertainment organizations and iconic landmarks, including the International Fountain, McCaw Hall, Space Needle, Climate Pledge Arena, Pacific Science Center, Museum of Pop Culture, The Children's Museum, and a host of other theatrical and cultural experiences. Seattle Center as the cultural heart of the City attracts more than 12 million visitors annually – along with approximately \$1.8 billion in business activity, and over \$600 million in labor income.

According to Seattle Center's feasibility study completed in 2018, there are several limitations at the Seattle Center station that negatively affect the passenger accessibility. Firstly, the Seattle Center station platform is only accessible via a bridge from the Armory. When the Armory is closed, the station platform is not accessible. Secondly, the station is not level with the train cars. For wheelchair users to access the Monorail train car, staff are required to manually place a portable ramp to bridge the gap between the platform and train car. The Seattle Center Monorail Station Reconfiguration project will eliminate barriers and make it easier for passengers of all ages and physical abilities to use, with an emphasis on accessibility for wheelchair users and families with strollers.

Historically, Seattle Center Monorail carries about two million passengers per year. The COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted ridership for the past two years. As of now, Seattle Center Monorail has returned to about 75% of pre-pandemic ridership levels. From January through August 2022, Seattle Center Monorail has had 1.1 million passenger boardings including the numbers below.

This project will open avenues to arts and culture for visitors with disabilities. It will also improve the accessibility and transit ridership experience for over 12 million yearly campus visitors to Seattle Center. As the community rebounds from COVID impacts, enhancing this critical cross-town connection benefits the entire community. Thank you for your full and fair consideration of the City of Seattle's application.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Maria Cantwell".

Maria Cantwell  
United States Senator