

MARIA CANTWELL
WASHINGTON



United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4705

August 4, 2020

The Honorable Elaine Chao
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave SE
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Secretary Chao,

I am writing in support of the Washington State Department of Transportation's (WSDOT) 2020 CRISI grant application for the Pacific Northwest Rail Corridor Reliability - Landslide Mitigation Phase III project. This project is critical to improving slope stability along coastal bluffs in a busy rail corridor serving Amtrak Cascades passenger rail trains, Sounder commuter trains, and freight trains.

According to WSDOT, landslides along the coastal bluffs north of Seattle have disrupted passenger and freight rail service for years. The project would serve a busy section of the rail corridor that hosts 14 passenger trains and an average of 21 freight trains each day. A total of more than 740,000 passengers (including Amtrak Cascades, Sounder and Amtrak Empire Builder passengers) travel through this area every year. Each landslide that reaches the tracks causes a 48-hour moratorium for passenger trains, severely disrupting rail service and leaving passengers to find other transportation options.

During phases I and II of this project, WSDOT utilized grant funding through the Department of Transportation's American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) to reduce the risk of landslides in 12 landslide prone sites between Seattle and Everett. Since completion of these improvement projects, no landslides have reached railroad tracks in the upgraded areas.

With grant funding, WSDOT will improve slope stability in three locations in Snohomish County that have seen numerous landslides. This will provide a safer route for both passenger and freight rail, reduce delays for passenger rail service, decrease the number of vehicles added on the highway during closures, and reduce delays for freight trains.

Thank you for your full and fair consideration to WSDOT's Pacific Northwest Rail Corridor Reliability - Landslide Mitigation Phase III project.

Sincerely,

Maria Cantwell
United States Senator