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February 9, 2021

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg  
Secretary of Transportation  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue Southeast  
Washington, D.C. 20590

RE: Letter of Support for the Industrial Way/Oregon Way Grant Applications

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

This letter is in support of the City of Longview's application to leverage \$85 million in state funding to obtain a \$13,420,000 DOT grant to complete construction of the Industrial Way, Oregon Way intersection (IWOW) Project.

The Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Council of Governments (CWCOG) is a regional, member led organization and was formed for the purpose of studying regional and governmental problems of mutual interest and concern. Transportation issues are a primary focus of the organization and the CWCOG strongly supports the city's efforts to solicit grant funding to supplement existing funding for the Industrial Way/Oregon Way intersection. The intersection is a key component of a T1 freight corridor. It also serves as a key tourism connector for northern Oregon and southern Washington beach communities.

As a local government in partnership with Longview, we supported inclusion of this project in the 2015 Connecting Washington transportation investment package. The \$16.1 billion investment included \$85 million for the IWOW project, which at the time was anticipated to completely fund it. Unfortunately, since 2015, costs for the project have escalated primarily due to findings that deeper foundations are necessary for the intersection. A federal investment would leverage the state's already significant investment to ensure the project is completed to its maximum potential to continue to drive the bi-state economy of Cowlitz County.

The IWOW project is critical to the region's economy. The project is located in the heart of the community's industrial waterfront area where State Route (SR) 432 (Industrial Way) and SR 433 (Oregon Way) intersect and provides direct access to Washington's third largest port, the Port of Longview, the growing Mint Farm Industrial Park and several other industrial businesses and private port operations along the Columbia River. Economic activity in this area moves over 20 million annual gross truck tonnage through the project site.

The IWOW intersection, with a direct connection to Oregon business operations, experiences heavy congestion, particularly during peak periods, that cause significant delays for traffic accessing the industrial district. The congestion is exacerbated by three at-grade roadway/railway crossings rail crossing that brings an average of 4 trains through the intersection each day. Existing train traffic routinely blocks the roadways between 5 to 7 minutes and cuts off the Port and industrial properties from emergency services. The resulting backups requires about 15 to 20 minutes to return to non-blockage conditions. Economic projections have found that by 2040, 24-30 trains could cross through intersection each day.

Honorable Pete Buttigieg letter

Page 2

The IWOW Project will eliminate the at-grade rail crossings by elevating the roadway and creating more efficiencies in the intersection to accommodate current traffic and the anticipated growth. The project supports the jobs and economic activity of the industrial businesses located in the area as well as the life safety of all of the regions residents that use the corridor.

The CWCOG serves a variety of planning functions for its member agencies. We serve as the Metropolitan Planning Organization for the Longview/Kelso/Rainier bi-state metropolitan area, the Regional Transportation Planning Organization for a five-county region and we also serve of the US Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration (EDA) designated Economic Development District for Cowlitz and Wahkiakum counties.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



William A. Fashing  
Executive Director