

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4704

February 12, 2018

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

Dear Secretary Chao:

I am writing in support of an application submitted by the City of Union Gap to the U.S. Department of Transportation's *Infrastructure for Rebuilding America (INFRA) Grants* program for the Regional Beltway Connector project.

The City of Union Gap is seeking an INFRA grant to complete the Regional Beltway Connector to increase safety and reduce congestion by removing freight traffic from the City's commercial and business districts and school zones. Today, the South Union Gap interchange does not fully connect I-82 and U.S. Route 97, pushing freight and residential traffic to the Valley Mall Boulevard interchange next to the Valley Mall Shopping Center. The City of Union Gap is working with the Washington State Department of Transportation to restructure the South Union Gap interchange to improve access to the interstate and link to the Regional Beltway Connector to establish a direct connection to I-82 from Union Gap and southwestern Yakima.

Union Gap and south Yakima serve a strong commercial and retail business industry. As a result of growth in this region and inadequate access to the interstate, heavy trucks move freight and other goods on local streets. Rail cargo is also impeding and delaying emergency services, freight, and residential traffic up to 15 times per day. Completing the Regional Beltway Connector would provide alternative routes for the movement of freight by truck and rail, and would increase the safety of residential neighborhoods, commercial areas, and school zones.

The Regional Beltway Connector project would also create new economic development and recreational opportunities for the local community. It would provide new access to over 400 acres of undeveloped and vacant property zoned for commercial and industrial use and improve access to the 234 acre Fullbright Park. Finally, this project would provide a more direct route to the Yakima Regional Air Terminal, the Yakima Armory, and the greater Yakima area.

Thank you for your consideration of the City of Union Gap's application. Please contact Samara Ressler in my Washington, D.C. office at 202-224-2621 with any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Patty Murray". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "P" and a long, sweeping underline.

Patty Murray
United States Senator