



REGIONAL SOLUTIONS OFFICE
GOVERNOR TINA KOTEK

February 23, 2023

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg, Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

I am writing this letter on behalf of the Greater Eastern Oregon Regional Solutions Advisory Board to express our support of the City of Pendleton and Oregon Department of Transportation's (ODOT) application to the U.S. Department of Transportation's Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant program. Grant funding will be used to complete the Southgate Interchange Improvements Project, a key priority for the region that will address significant safety concerns along two major freight corridors, while enabling economic development and access for Pendleton's rural community.

Located at the confluence of Interstate 84 and Highway 395, the Southgate Interchange is responsible for safely and efficiently connecting downtown Pendleton and the residential and commercial areas on both sides of I-84. However, the close proximity of the interchange to the ramp terminals of Exit 209 on I-84 coupled with high traffic flow often creates traffic back onto the highway, preventing travel from safely flowing off the interstate and through Pendleton. With vehicles forced to travel through the interchange for popular events such as Pendleton Round-Up and important regional facilities such as Blue Mountain Community College, St. Anthony Hospital, or the Eastern Oregon Correctional Facility, the current Southgate Interchange creates dangerous gridlock along the interstate and Southgate's intersections.

Grant funds will be used to reconstruct the Interchange by extending access ramps off the Interstate, expanding Southgate capacity, and improving intersections that facilitate traffic flow from Interstate access ramps, Southgate, and connector roads throughout Pendleton. In addition, the project will extend a local road (Perkins Avenue) south of the interchange to create an alternate, direct east-west route for local traffic. This will reduce local traffic demand on the interchange, while also opening access to over 100 acres of undeveloped land that will be used to meet workforce housing and economic development needs.

Completion of this project will turn this failing interchange into an asset for the region by reducing congestion, spurring economic development, and ensuring safe travel of both freight and local passengers. We strongly support the City's request and appreciate your consideration of the benefits this investment would bring to the region.

Regional Solutions is an economic and community development collaborative based in the Governor's office and including state community development agencies. We work with the private sector, foundations, and local, state and federal government to coordinate and leverage public investments to address regional priorities for Eastern Oregon. The Greater Eastern Oregon Regional Solutions Advisory Board has worked with the City of Pendleton and ODOT in many capacities throughout the years and has seen firsthand the importance of this project to the city and the entire region.

This award will support the rural economy of the City of Pendleton and eastern Oregon, and increase the economic competitiveness and safety of the region. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:

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Courtney Crowell, Eastern Oregon Region Coordinator
Regional Solutions
Office of Governor Tina Kotek