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April 14, 2020

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

Dear Secretary Chao:

I am writing in support of the City of Pendleton's application to the U.S. Department of Transportation's FY2020 Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) program. This City's grant request would support reconstruction of the Southgate Interchange to address significant safety concerns along two major freight corridors, while enabling economic development and access for Pendleton's rural community divided by the federal interstate.

The Southgate Interchange is located at the confluence of Interstate 84 and U.S. Highway 395 in the rural eastern Oregon community of Pendleton. Under its current construction, the Interchange is failing to meet its purpose of safely and efficiently facilitating traffic between these two highways while connecting downtown Pendleton with the residential and commercial areas of the City which are separated by the Interstate. The close proximity of the interchange to the ramp terminals of Exit 209 on I-84 coupled with high traffic flow along Southgate (US 395) creates consistent traffic backups onto the highway from off-ramps that place Interstate traffic at risk and prevent safe passage off the highway through Pendleton. Furthermore, traveling to employment opportunities and other daily destinations consistently requires Pendleton residents to travel through the Southgate Interchange area. Residents routinely face congestion and dangerous intersection failures that delay trips or require traveling significant distances to the east or west to avoid the interchange.

The BUILD grant funds will 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 connecting roads throughout Pendleton. Completion of this project will turn this failing interchange into an asset for the region by reducing congestion, spurring economic development with enhanced transportation access, and ensuring safe travel of freight, passenger vehicle, pedestrian, and bicycle traffic.

We strongly support the City's request and appreciate your consideration of this proposal.

Sincerely,


Chris Fritsch
Superintendent