



Washington State Senate

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Secretary Elaine L. Chao
Secretary of Transportation
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Subject: Letter of Support for the Apple Capital Loop INFRA Grant Application, Wenatchee, Washington

Dear Secretary Chao,

As the senator representing the Wenatchee Valley in the Washington State Legislature, I would like to voice my enthusiastic support for the Apple Capital Loop INFRA Grant application. Having been raised in the Wenatchee Valley, I am keenly aware of the need for significant infrastructure improvement in this community. Through my conversations with the City of Wenatchee, as well as my own research on the INFRA Grant, I am confident that the Apple Capital Loop Project demonstrates a very prudent use of these important grant dollars.

The Wenatchee Valley is the population hub of the 12th Legislative District. Dubbed “The Apple Capital of the World,” it has long been a leader in agriculture and hydroelectric generation. In recent years, we have also gained statewide recognition as a center for outdoor recreation, healthcare, and the service and wine industries. The natural beauty and opportunities for hiking, snow-skiing, boating, and camping provided by the Cascade Mountain foothills and Columbia River have drawn visitors from across the state and region. Active collaboration at the state, county, and municipal levels continues to attract new businesses and families here every year. Our convenient central location and four seasons of weather make the Wenatchee Valley an attractive place to do business, vacation, and live.

Although we welcome the changes we are seeing in the Wenatchee Valley, our aging transportation infrastructure is insufficient to safely and efficiently support our current rate of growth. Our primary concern is the safety of our citizens. Given the 12th District’s history of devastating wildfires, easy routes in and out of the city are essential. Without significant investments in safer roads, and related infrastructure projects, our current rate of growth could create serious transportation challenges across the region.

The Apple Capital Loop Project identifies five major areas where improvements are needed. In essence, the project’s goal is to complete what is now a partial loop of highway connecting the cities of Wenatchee and East Wenatchee, which are separated by the Columbia River. Completing the loop will not only contribute significantly to economic development in both cities and their respective counties, but will also vastly improve safety on both sides of the Columbia. In Wenatchee, this will be achieved by the construction of a new bypass which will provide a third way in and out of the city. On the east side of the river, along the Sunset Highway, funding from the INFRA Grant will help in the construction of three additional vehicle lanes, effectively doubling access to the highway.

One aspect of the Apple Capital Loop Project that I consider particularly significant is the construction of a pedestrian bridge connecting South Wenatchee to the Pipeline Bridge. Historically, the South Wenatchee neighborhood has housed the valley’s large agricultural worker population. The new bridge will increase the safety of the neighborhood by allowing pedestrian access to a pathway which can currently only be reached by crossing an active railroad. It will also make it possible for members of the community to reach the Pipeline Bridge, (the main pedestrian bridge which connects Wenatchee and East Wenatchee,) and will expand access to our recently completed bike trails. The new bridge will be beneficial to our community on many levels: it will improve commerce between the two cities, and will also provide a valuable service to a traditionally underserved group in our community.

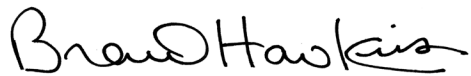
The Apple Capital Loop INFRA Grant proposal is appropriately scaled for our collective benefit, and represents years of hard work among the many groups partnering on all levels of government. Through the “Connecting Washington” transportation package approved by our Legislature in 2015, the Wenatchee region will receive \$81 million towards

infrastructure improvements in Wenatchee and East Wenatchee. An additional \$20 million from local and other state sources give the region more than \$100 million of leverage for this project. While the City of Wenatchee is the official name on the grant proposal, the team behind this project is a region-wide coalition of more than a half-dozen governments, councils, and businesses in the Wenatchee Valley. The matching funds in this application are significant and represent a solid commitment from the State of Washington to the Wenatchee Valley.

I believe that the Wenatchee Valley's Apple Capital Loop Project is an extremely worthy applicant for an INFRA Grant. As ours is largely an agricultural economy, the project meets the Administration and Department of Transportation's goal of serving America's rural communities. As an example of innovation, the various shareholders have worked closely to ensure that neither local, state, nor federal funds will be wasted. By using local funds as well as funds from "Connecting Washington" to match the federal grant, the project demonstrates collaboration at every possible level. And finally, the need is here. In order to meet the challenges of our growing population and ensure our community's safety for the future, we must act soon. The Wenatchee Valley is ready to rise to the Administration's challenge. Please support this grant application. It has my strongest support.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brad Hawkins". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Brad Hawkins