

May 4, 2020

Attn: Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE  
Washington DC 20590

RE: Franklin Boulevard Opportunity Zone Corridor BUILD Application

Dear Secretary Chao:

Travel Lane County supports the request by the Cities of Eugene and Springfield for a Better Utilizing Infrastructure to Leverage Development (BUILD) grant for improvements to Franklin Boulevard in the heart of our County.

Travel Lane County's mission is to increase visitor trips and overnight stays within the region. Being adjacent to the University of Oregon, there are currently six hotels located on Franklin Boulevard that host thousands of visitors a year, with another under construction. In addition, Franklin Boulevard is a vital component of Lane County's road network, providing the means for cross-regional travel and connecting residents and visitors to important regional attractions. From the beaches of the Oregon Coast to the hiking and biking trails of the Cascade Mountains, Franklin Boulevard transports people to these destinations by way of Oregon Highway Route 126 and U.S. Interstate 5. It does this while providing great access to downtown Eugene, downtown Springfield, Matthew Knight Arena and Hayward Field which will host two upcoming major track and field events – the 2021 Track and Field Olympic Trials and the 2022 World Athletics Championship, attracting athletes from around the world.

As the seat of the region's tourism industry, Franklin Boulevard is integral to the continued functioning and growth of Lane County's economic engine. For the region to develop its full potential, Franklin Boulevard, a major arterial that serves as a gateway into Eugene and Springfield, must be brought up to date as an urban corridor. Currently, it lacks accessible and continuous sidewalks and bicycle facilities. Additionally, its current configuration limits the frequency of service offered by the area's bus rapid transit system, the EmX. Delays along the boulevard impact the movement of people walking, biking, and driving. The result is a congested roadway and unsafe travel conditions.

This project would improve intersections along the corridor and connect fragmented sidewalk and bike facility networks. This will allow visitors to comfortably walk to University of Oregon events, enjoy faster travel times, safer travel conditions, and increased bus service. The corridor will be seen and used by not only Eugene-Springfield residents, but also regional, national, and international travelers visiting the riverfront area. The ability of the *Franklin Boulevard Opportunity Zone Corridor* to connect these guests to outdoor recreation, world class athletic venues and more located throughout the region is of the utmost importance.

This BUILD grant application is strongly supported by Travel Lane County. I urge you to fund this collaborative transportation project and award this BUILD grant to the Cities of Eugene and Springfield for the *Franklin Boulevard Opportunity Zone Corridor*.

Sincerely,



Kari Westlund  
President & CEO



TRAVEL LANE COUNTY



TRAVEL LANE COUNTY  
EUGENE, CASCADES & COAST SPORTS