

May 25, 2021

Attn: Honorable Pete Buttigieg
Secretary of Transportation
US Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE
Washington, DC 20590

RE: Franklin Boulevard Project RAISE Application

Secretary Buttigieg:

We are writing to you in support of the Franklin Boulevard project RAISE application submitted by the Cities of Eugene and Springfield. As United Front partners from Oregon, Lane County and the Willamalane Park and Recreation District join Eugene and Springfield in coming together to support this project as a key regional priority. United Front partner agencies share a common understanding of our mutually supportive missions to improve the environmental, socioeconomic, and physical health of our community and visitors, upon which our livelihoods all depend.

This project clearly meets the goals of the RAISE 2021 application criteria. The Franklin Boulevard project investment will foster a much better quality of life for all through direct safety- and climate-focused investments, particularly for those most in need. Franklin Boulevard lacks accessible and continuous sidewalks and bike facilities. The current configuration is also problematic for our metro area's bus rapid transit system, the Emerald Express or "EmX." The project will address traffic delays and outdated, inaccessible infrastructure by providing safe, healthy, multimodal transportation options.

A priority of Lane County's 2018-2021 Strategic Plan is a safe, healthy county that provides robust infrastructure as a key ingredient of vibrant, complete communities. What we learned from our participation in the Government Alliance on Race and Equity helped us apply an equity lens to our Strategic Plan. Revitalizing Franklin Boulevard directly aligns with our Strategic Plan's Initiatives to "Enhance Equity and Access in Service Delivery and Representation in Governance" and to "Protect and Enhance our Natural and Built Environments." Key activities resulting from these Strategic Initiatives are to develop and implement our Equity 2.0 Plan and a comprehensive Climate Action Plan for Lane County. Changes along Franklin Boulevard will help us meet the Climate Action Plan's effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by developing walkable neighborhoods and addressing a transit bottleneck.

The transformation of Franklin Boulevard will also greatly aid in people's ability to travel safely. Lane County has unfortunately led Oregon in traffic fatalities, and we are actively working to remedy this. Eugene and Springfield are Lane County's partners who help to implement our Transportation Safety Action Plan. Investments like the Franklin Boulevard project will save lives and reduce injuries along our major roadways while still providing efficient movement of goods and people.

Improvements to Franklin Boulevard are investments that support our people and places. These improvements call attention to the groundwork the cities of Eugene and Springfield have laid to give housing providers and businesses a lead on preliminary site planning for greater certainty in timing their investments and identifying suitable development sites. Lane County is now moving forward on a priority effort adjacent to Franklin Boulevard in Springfield. We are working to develop a facility that focuses on providing safe places to stay for our medically fragile, unhoused community members.

Medical services will provide managed, routine care for those living in the shelter. With the goal of having the facility up and running this year, future residents and patients will be able to depend on the additional mobility and travel choices offered by the Franklin Boulevard project.

Franklin Boulevard serves more than just adjacent properties, as it is a backbone of the entire Lane County region. It is positioned in the heart of Lane County between our beaches and the Oregon Cascade Mountains. Our metro and rural areas alike benefit from the highly visible access to Interstate 5 from Franklin Boulevard. Many of the County's rural residents come to the Eugene-Springfield area to Franklin Boulevard to access employment, services, and recreational opportunities. Our rural and urban communities depend on Franklin Boulevard to provide successful development opportunities to increase the availability of good-paying jobs, which means preparing sites with frontage improvements and providing infrastructure that functions for years to come.

Willamalane is eager to continue implementing the parks and open space vision adjacent to Franklin Boulevard, which will greatly improve the lives of those we serve—not just by way of increased recreational opportunities but also through providing needed infrastructure that allows people to get around in ways other than by car. This project will act as a catalyst for and complement future active, healthy lifestyles along the corridor. Our national award-winning vision includes public park blocks amidst 35% of Springfield's much-needed high-density housing and transit-oriented development sites along the north side Franklin Boulevard. The vision also includes the continuation of our region's iconic riverbank path system with a riverfront path that parallels Franklin Boulevard less than a quarter-mile apart to serve as a critical non-motorized transportation connection between Eugene and Springfield.

Willamalane is committed to creating and promoting inclusion across all public spaces, places, facilities, and programs that the district manages. Willamalane's mission is to: "Deliver exceptional parks and recreation to enrich the lives of everyone we serve." Parks should never discriminate between race, income, or age. They must be equalizers that welcome and serve all. Accordingly, we are acting on a need for a district-wide diversity, equity, and inclusion strategy to ensure that everyone can fully enjoy our existing and future public places—those connected to Franklin Boulevard are no exception.

Together, our organizations continue to emphasize our strong support for the much-needed investment in this central part of our region. Please consider our shared vision for this important and collaborative transportation project and award this RAISE grant to our community.

Sincerely,



Joe Berney, Chair
Lane County Board of Commissioners



Greg James, President
Willamalane Park and Recreation District Board

