

May 19, 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:

On behalf of people with disabilities, we would like to express our support for the Franklin Boulevard application from the Cities of Eugene and Springfield, Oregon. Funding the Franklin Boulevard project through the Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) program will help transform the corridor into a more age-friendly, accessible, and safer street for all.

The Lane Independent Living Alliance (LILA) is an organization that serves people with physical, mental, cognitive, and sensory disabilities in Lane County. LILA looks forward to the accessible sidewalks, ramps, pedestrian crossings, and increased frequency of transit with level boarding stations of the Franklin Boulevard project that will help serve the community members we work with. 16% of people living in the Central Lane metropolitan area have a disability, compared to the Oregon statewide average of 14.7%. Additionally, some neighborhoods along the corridor have up to 35% of renter households with zero car access. Thus, to serve the needs of those who cannot or choose not to drive, investing in multimodal and accessible transportation on Franklin Boulevard in the heart of our community is critical.

We envision a world in which people with disabilities truly belong and have equal access to opportunity, the ability to participate fully, and are able to exercise meaningful choice. Investments are needed, such as rebuilding the Franklin Boulevard corridor, to increase people with disabilities' opportunities to reach their full potential by being able to navigate transportation systems safely with a range of options, including by foot, bicycle, mobility device, or by taking reliable, efficient, and accessible public transit.

People with intellectual and developmental disabilities are disproportionately impacted by Oregon's housing crisis. The Eugene-Springfield region's tight housing market has seen median home prices increase 130% over the last 10 years. A recent study suggests that there may be upwards of 24,000 adults in Oregon and southwest Washington with intellectual and development disabilities who are at risk of losing their housing in the coming years.<sup>1</sup> Other Oregonians with disabilities are already living without housing. The local housing authority, Homes for Good, owns property and plans to build affordable housing along Franklin Boulevard. Private developers are also submitting proposals to build additional housing to help implement the Glenwood Refinement Plan and address the identified housing needs in the region. Increasing the development of additional housing along Franklin Boulevard, particularly affordable housing for low-income households, could help to mitigate the affordability and accessibility barriers to housing for Oregon's most vulnerable.

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<sup>1</sup> ECONorthwest. (2020). *Housing Needs for Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*.  
<https://www.kunifoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/ECONorthwestStudy.pdf>.

The Franklin Boulevard project will support the overburdened communities we work with by connecting disadvantaged community members with increased access to education, jobs, services, and recreational opportunities. Investing in this key corridor in the center of the Eugene-Springfield metropolitan area will reduce barriers to mobility for those who need it most and will provide more choices and paths to economic success that will help increase community members' quality of life and access to opportunity.

Sincerely,



Sheila Thomas

Lane Independent Living Alliance

