

June 29, 2021

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

RE: Franklin Boulevard RAISE Application

Secretary Buttigieg:

Please consider this letter a showing of our highest support for this important, collaborative effort and award RAISE Grant funds to the Franklin Boulevard project submitted jointly by the Cities of Eugene and Springfield, together with financial commitment from the Lane Transit District.

The COVID-19 health crisis highlighted just how wide the digital divide is, especially among our overburdened communities. As daily activities shifted to virtual platforms, households without reliable and affordable internet lacked the same health, education, and employment advantages that their digitally connected peers enjoyed. The Franklin Boulevard project includes plans to continue laying conduit as the groundwork for the next extension of fiber optics. Additional fiber optics will open possibilities for expanding EUGNet, our local open-access fiber network, across the region leveraging a publicly owned, and well-established, regional fiber interconnection facility and a newly established peering exchange (the Willamette Internet Exchange (WIX)). Any qualified ISP is able to lease facility space and competitively priced fiber, resulting in far less expensive yet far more powerful internet service. The Franklin Boulevard project further expands potential opportunity as we work to fulfill the goal of being one of the best places in the country for reliable, responsible, affordable, and openly accessible fiber utility and internet service, a service that is for the benefit of all communities.

EUGNet began in 2018 through a partnership between the City of Eugene, the Eugene Water & Electric Board, the Lane Council of Governments, and the Technology Association of Oregon. Fiber conduit was installed in downtown Eugene to support economic development and competitiveness. Its existence has had a cascading effect, increasing speeds and lowering prices for internet connectivity through market competition, extending its benefits beyond Eugene's downtown, which anchors the western extent of the Franklin Boulevard project.

Springfield was awarded a National Science Foundation grant to work with the WIX organization to leverage and, in a sense, replicate EUGNet's success and is now overseeing the build-out and management of a physical interconnection location in Springfield just east of the Franklin Boulevard project. The Springfield site will connect with facilities in Eugene and allow customers in Springfield expanded opportunities and choices for high-speed access offered by the fiber optic broadband network. The WIX organization, and those who manage Eugene's interconnection facility, are working with the City of Springfield and the Springfield Utility Board to bring the project to life.

Conduit installed by the Springfield Utility Board (SUB) provides similar (and related) advantages in the Glenwood area of Springfield, which represents the eastern half of the Franklin Boulevard project. In addition, the City of Springfield's foresight to provide extra conduit with a separate duct bank project along Phase 1 of the project (completed in 2018) will allow opportunities to install

fiber optics in key locations. SUB looks forward to the possibility of expanding fiber facilities with this major capital transportation project.

The Eugene-Springfield region continues to seek ways to support our local and neighboring communities through reliable and accessible internet connectivity. Doing so creates a bridge to opportunities and services that may not otherwise be available while providing the additional benefit of strengthening our economy by establishing our area as a center for technology in Oregon. Such a reputation and quality of infrastructure attracts innovative companies who choose our cities as their preferred locations. We urge you to give this regional project full support.

Sincerely,



Sally Bell
Vice President & Executive Director
Technology Association of Oregon
Southern Willamette Valley



Jacob Callister, Principal Planner
Lane Council of Governments
Project Manager, EUGNet
Manager, Interconnection Facility at Park
Place



TECHNOLOGY
ASSOCIATION
OF OREGON

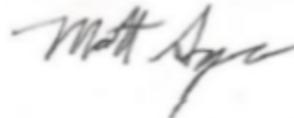
EUGNET

Community. Connectivity. Accessibility.

Rodney Price

Digitally signed by RodneyPrice Date: 2021.06.29

Rod Price, Assistant General Manager
Eugene Water & Electric Board



Matt Sayre, Secretary
The Willamette Internet Exchange



Jeff Nelson, General Manager
Springfield Utility Board

