

July 1, 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 the Cities of Cottage Grove, Oakridge, Creswell, Veneta, Florence, Coburg, and Westfir in rural Lane County, Oregon, we urge you to fund the RAISE application from the Cities of Eugene and Springfield to reconstruct Franklin Boulevard. Investing in the Franklin Boulevard project will help support the economic vitality of smaller cities throughout Lane County, Oregon. All of the small cities throughout our region from the Oregon Coast to the Cascade Mountains are accessible to and from the Franklin Boulevard corridor by way of Oregon Highway Route 126 and U.S. Interstate 5.

We eagerly await the benefits our surrounding rural areas will see from the economic prosperity made possible by the needed public investment in the Franklin Boulevard project. Many smaller cities throughout Lane County will benefit from the good paying jobs, educational opportunities, and regional services that have developed and will continue to develop along Franklin Boulevard. Some of our residents are contractors on infrastructure projects, which include privately and publicly funded developments underway and envisioned along Franklin Boulevard. People who work these critical jobs, students, and a notable proportion of other commuters in our cities, rely on transportation networks that function well to get them to the heart of the Eugene-Springfield metro area safely and on time.

As the timber industry has evolved and harvesting decreased, smaller cities throughout rural Lane County are investing in tourism as a leading economic strategy and focusing on supporting small businesses to grow and be successful. Upgrades to Franklin Boulevard will further enhance access to Hayward Field and the Matt Knight Arena and build upon the region's ability to host ever increasing nationally and internationally significant events, including the U.S. Olympic Track and Field Trials that typically draw tens of thousands of visitors daily. Tourists have the opportunity to visit smaller cities and explore our recreational offerings within an hour's drive while enjoying local shops, breweries, wineries, and lodging.

This corridor also provides access to Bushnell University, Lane Community College, the University of Oregon and UO's Knight Science Campus. Many rural students, faculty and residents benefit from these educational opportunities that enhance and enrich our region.

Veneta is home to the Oregon Country Fair, which typically draws 45,000 attendees. Florence, Oregon's Coastal Playground, hosts the Rhododendron Festival and sees bicycle tourists from around the globe pedaling the Pacific Coast. Local residents and recreational cyclists enjoy treats made from local ingredients at the Creswell Bakery, which truly embodies the city's identity as "The Friendly City."

Oakridge is a year-round recreational paradise located in the foothills of the Cascade Mountains and is home to internationally renowned mountain bike trails. Oakridge is located at the start of the West Cascade National Scenic Byway. Cottage Grove is home to the Covered Bridges Scenic Bikeway, which

features historic bridges along a 36-mile, family-friendly bike route. The iconic Willamette River that runs along Franklin Boulevard connects many of our rural Lane County communities with our shared interest in enhancing recreation and tourism while protecting our natural scenic resources.

Our cities have already supported the initial phase of reconstructing Franklin Boulevard, which was completed in 2018, by prioritizing \$6,000,000 in ODOT Enhance Program state funds and \$625,000 in ODOT ConnectOregon lottery revenue funds through our roles on the Lane Area Commission on Transportation. Rural communities throughout the surrounding areas in Oregon will benefit from federal investments in the Franklin Boulevard project. Please consider our recommendation to support this transformative project and award a RAISE grant to the Eugene-Springfield, Oregon region.

Sincerely,



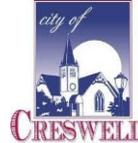
Jeff Gowing, Mayor  
City of Cottage Grove



Kathy Holston, Mayor  
City of Oakridge



Amy Knudsen, Mayor  
City of Creswell



Keith Weiss, Mayor  
City of Veneta



Joe Henry, Mayor  
City of Florence



Ray Smith, Mayor  
City of Coburg



Melody Cornelius, Mayor  
City of Westfir

