

July 7, 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:

Travel Lane County and TrackTown USA support the application submitted jointly by the Cities of Eugene and Springfield, with support from the Lane Transit District, for funding through the Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant opportunity for improvements to Franklin Boulevard in the heart of Lane County, Oregon. We believe that rebuilding Franklin Boulevard is integral to economic growth in our region. By constructing (a) intersections designed for safety and efficiency for all modes of transportation, (b) separated facilities for people walking, biking, and rolling, and (c) a second dedicated lane for bus rapid transit, the project will increase safety for residents and visitors, increase transportation options for all, and transform Franklin Boulevard from a place that you travel through to a place that you travel to.

Travel Lane County's mission is to increase visitor trips and overnight stays within the region. 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, the Matthew Knight Arena and Hayward Field at the University of Oregon where TrackTown USA, our nation's premier track and field event management organization, will co-host the world's most prestigious events, including the World Athletics Championships in July 2022. These events hosted at Hayward Field bring between 30,000 to 55,000 visitors to the region, including our invited athletes and their support teams, broadcasters, and media, as well as fans from around the globe. This will be the first time this world event has been hosted in the United States.

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 must be brought up to date as an urban corridor. Hayward Field on Agate Street is located two blocks south of Franklin Boulevard in Eugene and less than a half-mile east of the Glenwood Riverfront District area in Springfield. Guests are already reserving accommodations in both cities, including at the six hotels currently located on Franklin Boulevard (and another scheduled to open April 2022). What these guests will encounter, however, is a corridor that lacks accessible and continuous sidewalks and bike facilities, limiting their freedom of movement and creating unsafe conditions. The current configuration is also problematic for the region's busiest bus rapid transit (EmX) route, which is heavily used by our visitors as they travel between destinations located on, and connected by, Franklin Boulevard.

Improving the corridor would benefit not just our guests who visit the area for many reasons, including

athletes and their supporters, but the residents who rely on the employment opportunities provided by tourism in the region. The Matthew Knight Arena, Hayward Field, University of Oregon, and adjacent hotels all contribute to the hospitality, food and beverage, wood manufacturing, and construction industries. Travel Lane County and TrackTown USA understand that the Franklin Boulevard project is an incredible opportunity to create jobs and strengthen our regional economy via the Franklin Boulevard corridor, thus adding significant value to our shared missions by creating a new, high-energy physical environment that guests can enjoy while visiting our region for years to come.

Please give the Cities of Eugene's and Springfield's RAISE grant request for Franklin Boulevard your thoughtful consideration for funding.

Sincerely,



Michael Reilly
President
TrackTown USA, Inc.

Sincerely,



Kari Westlund
President & CEO
Travel Lane County

