

July 7, 2021

Attn: Honorable Pete Buttigieg
Secretary of Transportation
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, S.E.
Washington, DC 20590

RE: Franklin Boulevard RAISE Application

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

As the leaders of White Bird Clinic and Planned Parenthood of Southwestern Oregon, we provide critical social services to Eugene, Springfield, and Lane County. We write to urge you to fund Eugene's, Springfield's, and Lane Transit District's joint project to invest in Franklin Boulevard with RAISE grant funds. This joint project is one of the ambitious ways that we can provide access to social services that are grounded in equity. This climate-smart investment will allow our most vulnerable community members to live in the healthiest way possible.

Our missions share the value of serving the health and well-being of those most in need; whether mentally, in times of physical emergencies, or day-to-day health and wellness. Our programs work toward instilling hope by helping people move out of poverty, whether through food assistance, homeless prevention, emergency shelter, and more. There is ever-increasing demand for these services and for healthcare that is affordable to everyone, especially with the growing number of households, seniors, persons with disabilities, and others in our community who cannot meet basic needs for food, shelter, medical care, and transportation. These factors—combined with a very tight housing market—have resulted in many households paying more than they can afford for housing and wellness. This translates into a growing number of persons experiencing homelessness who may also need expert care for the mental and physical challenges they face as barriers preventing them from living their best possible lives.

This is where we come in. Mental health, physical health, and economic opportunity go hand-in-hand. With an inability to access affordable transportation options, access to help, jobs, and healthcare becomes more difficult. In the 2020-2025 Eugene-Springfield Consolidated Plan for housing and community development, stakeholders identified that mental health, addiction services, and housing services as the greatest service need. In our area, STIs are on the rise, especially among the most vulnerable populations. Increasing access to affordable transportation will allow everyone to access the high-quality care and services they need, want, and deserve.

For over 50 years, White Bird Clinic has recognized people who have been alienated and disenfranchised as equal members of our community. Our nationally recognized mobile crisis response team, CAHOOTS (Crisis Assistance Helping Out on the Streets), provides 24/7 intervention in the Eugene-Springfield area. These teams are an alternative to police response for non-violent crises. CAHOOTS provides immediate stabilization for urgent medical needs or psychological crises, assessments, referrals, advocacy, and transportation to the next step in treatment. In responding to emergencies and in transporting those we serve, we need to do so effectively. The anticipated changes to Franklin Boulevard will allow us to do just that. Minimizing intersection delays, minimizing the risk and severity of crashes, and reducing conflict points between vehicles, cyclists, and pedestrians will mean that we can get to someone in need minutes faster. Just one minute can mean the difference between life and death.

Planned Parenthood's Eugene-Springfield Health Center in Glenwood is especially impacted by the transportation issues present on Franklin Boulevard. Our Health Center, like Lane County ShelterCare's managed care effort, has frontage right on Franklin Boulevard, with direct access by the area's bus rapid transit system (EmX). In the last two months, our Nurses and Nurse Practitioners have responded and provided care at the scene to two car crashes before first responders could arrive; our building has lost power and emergency generators have ensured our critical care is not impacted during these crashes. This high traffic road is how we welcome everyone - those with or without insurance, with English as a preferred language or not, and no matter how they identify or who they love. Many of our clients and staff come to our facility by way of EmX and bike. Our work demands we hold ourselves to the highest medical and education standards and guidelines; For clients who rely on us and our staff who use public transit, bike, or dream of walking to work, we want our transportation infrastructure to meet and exceed the highest standards as they come to work or access our services on Franklin Boulevard.

The Franklin Boulevard project is only one of many ways that will help people gain control of their social and physical well-being through freedom of travel choice and through freeing up their transportation costs. Together, we call for a reliable and safe transportation network that is available to people for aspects of their lives they did not choose, and that is available to those who have the right to make other choices. The Franklin Boulevard project will offer yet another set of choices people should have the ability to make as they seek to get to where they need to go. Thank you for considering this opportunity to make truly transformative change in the Eugene-Springfield metro area.

Sincerely,



Lisa Gardner, President & CEO
Planned Parenthood of Southwestern Oregon



Planned Parenthood of Southwestern Oregon



Chris Hecht, Executive Director
White Bird Clinic

