

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4705

November 8, 2024

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

I am writing in support of the Spokane Transit Authority's (STA) application to the Department of Transportation's Reconnecting Communities Pilot grant program. STA is seeking \$50 million for its Division Street Bus Rapid Transit Project.

Division Street is a vital north-south corridor in Spokane, Washington state's second-largest city, supporting over 50,000 cars each day and the city's second busiest bus route with nearly a million riders annually. The arterial serves as U.S. Route 2 through downtown and connects Interstate 90 to the northern part of the city and its suburbs. However, the corridor is also a barrier to transportation for people in the surrounding community who rely on walking, biking, and transit.

Historic redlining practices in the City of Spokane segregated people of color on the east side of Division Street through the 1960s, and the Division Street corridor remains home to a higher concentration of people who identify as a minority compared to Spokane county overall. Nearly a quarter of the population living within a half-mile of the Division Street corridor identify as a minority. Additionally, the population within the project walkshed has a much higher rate of low-income residents (22%) compared to the county overall (8%) and two census tracts are designated in the highest index of low-income residents according to Justice40 Initiative criteria. These populations are more likely to face greater mobility challenges and depend upon and regularly use transit services.

However, Division Street is currently difficult to travel for pedestrians, cyclists, and transit riders. There are no bicycle facilities along the corridor, and much of the corridor prohibits cyclists on the street. The sidewalks along the arterial have little to no buffer between pedestrians and traffic and there are limited crossing opportunities for pedestrians, leading to inconvenient, out-of-direction travel, and unsafe crossing behaviors.

If successful, STA will use grant funding to convert the existing bus Route 25 to a bus rapid transit service and make capital improvements to increase active transportation options. The conversion will include the construction of up to 44 enhanced stations, increased bus capacity, and dedicated transit lanes to ease traffic flow. The project will also include improvements such as elevated station platforms, filled sidewalk gaps, added crosswalks, and multimodal improvements for bicycles. Additionally, STA plans to use zero-emission buses to help improve air quality and provide a smoother ride. The bus rapid transit service and major improvements to passenger accessibility and safety will directly benefit historically underserved residents and provide them with fast, frequent, and reliable bus service in one of the busiest corridors.

Thank you for your full and fair consideration of the Spokane Transit Authority's application to the Reconnecting Communities Pilot Grant Program.

Sincerely,



Maria Cantwell

United States Senator