



July 16, 2021

TO: [Individual U.S. Representative or Senator]

RE: Funding for Reconnecting Communities Divided by Highways and Railroads

Dear honorable members of Congress,

We are a coalition of community organizers working across Washington State. We are writing to express strong support for your vote to pass the highway mitigation funding program in House Bill 2859, "Restoring Neighborhoods and Strengthening Communities Program", and Senate Bill 1202, "Reconnecting Communities Act."

This is a necessary and vital program to improve equity, mobility, health, and connectivity in cities, towns, and neighborhoods. The sooner Congress passes this program, the sooner we can move forward together on bi-partisan projects that will have a major impact on improving our communities.

A number of ongoing grassroots efforts are in various stages of organization and study. Local projects in Seattle that can directly benefit include the campaign to lid Interstate 5 in Downtown, an I-5 lid in the University District, redesigning State Highway 99/Aurora Avenue, and bridging over railroad tracks at Jackson Hub. A number of these projects already have community support or are supported by official policies, while others need a boost in resources to get off the ground. Lead organizations may apply for funding as soon as the program is approved.

These initiatives can benefit from all three of the grant programs that are proposed by the legislation: 1) community engagement, education, and capacity building support; 2) planning and feasibility studies; and 3) capital construction funding. These grants will accelerate local projects and help us conduct equitable public outreach, advance and complete technical studies, and initiate the capital projects that are necessary to restore neighborhoods fractured and polluted by major transportation routes.

Highway mitigation is a growing trend, with opportunities to improve public health and unlock economic development opportunities in cities of all types and sizes across America. The Congress for the New Urbanism (CNU) maintains a [biannual report](#) of "Freeways Without Futures", most recently published in June, that identifies many freeways across the country that can be lidded, removed, or converted to boulevards. Some of these projects were recently profiled by [The New York Times](#) in the article, "Can Removing Highways Fix America's Cities?"

We encourage you to not only retain the funding level of \$3 billion per year but also extend the appropriation to at least fiscal year 2030. There is no shortage of neighborhoods divided by past transportation investments which can benefit from this program. We also support the equitable funding criteria identified in both the House and Senate versions of the program, though encourage you to find a combined approach that prioritizes environmental justice while retaining flexibility for a variety of community types affected by infrastructural barriers.

This proposed funding program is vital to improve equity, mobility, health, and connectivity in communities across the country. Please vote to advance House Bill 2859 and Senate Bill 1202, and thank you for your work to reconnect American cities and neighborhoods. We are available as a resource if you have any questions or need further information.

Thank you,

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www.allianceforpioneersquare.org



Aurora Reimagined Coalition

www.got99problems.org



BRIDGEWRIGHT

www.bridgewright.co



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www.cascade.org

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www.centraseattlegreenways.com



www.downtownseattle.org



www.futurewise.org



www.gdwa.net

Meridian Condominium Homeowners
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www.scidpda.org

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