

July 5, 2019



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**Mission**

Building the case and constituency for lidding Interstate 5 and building a more connected, sustainable, and equitable Seattle.

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TO: Secretary Elaine L. Chao  
United States Department of Transportation  
Office of the Secretary of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, D.C. 20590

FROM: Lid I-5 Steering Committee  
Seattle, WA

RE: 2019 BUILD Grant Application for *Partnering for the Future of I-5*

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Lid I-5 is a Seattle-based community organization promoting public and private investment in developing land over Interstate 5. We enthusiastically support the Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) grant application jointly submitted by the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) and the City of Seattle. Funding from this grant will be dedicated to the *Partnering for the Future of Interstate 5* planning project.

The community and our local officials have recognized a key corridor planning element: the opportunity to lid I-5 with platforms for any combination of commercial use, housing, parks, and other infrastructure for our booming city. Lids make efficient use of limited urban land and doubles the utility of our transportation system. Lids have been a common and successful economic development tool for decades in major cities like Washington, D.C., New York, Dallas, and Phoenix.

The Lid I-5 team has been meeting with WSDOT and like-minded stakeholders for several years to understand the challenges and potential around lidding Interstate 5 in central Seattle. We all share a vision for a more capable and resilient urban freeway. I-5 was completed over 50 years ago and is no longer meeting today's mobility and economic needs. It is time for the freeway to be modernized and rehabilitated in a collaborative way. Through a sustained planning effort and comprehensive analysis, the I-5 of the future can better meet multiple goals: co-exist with urban neighborhoods; address air quality, stormwater runoff, and noise issues; enhance land development opportunities; more efficiently move people and goods; and reinforce a vital link for natural disaster response.

Funding from a BUILD grant would further the efforts toward an implementable lid plan and much more: Laying the groundwork for a more efficient and reliable transportation system.

I-5 is a central pillar of the western U.S. freeway system. It provides vital support for local, regional, national, and international economies by moving freight between our major ports and industries. In Western Washington alone, over 10 million tons of freight move through the corridor each year. It also connects rural, suburban, and urban communities. More than 250,000 vehicles use the freeway each day in the Puget Sound region. That means thousands of people rely on I-5 to travel for work, school, shopping, medical appointments, and defending our nation at Joint Base Lewis-McChord.

The role the I-5 system plays in the daily life of Washingtonians cannot be underestimated. Yet, since its opening nearly six decades ago, the central 107-mile corridor has never been comprehensively analyzed nor improved. Years of wear-and-tear and insufficient planning resources have resulted in considerable negative impacts for both our region and the nation at-large. WSDOT estimates that congestion on I-5 in Western Washington costs the American economy \$5 billion annually, a figure that is expected to balloon to \$15 billion annually by 2026. Additionally, the earthquake hazard in our rapidly growing region places additional pressure on the need to address long-term safety and resiliency.

From both an economic and public safety perspective, America needs an I-5 that is equipped to handle the challenges of the future. The *Partnering for the Future of I-5* planning project represents a smart, pay-it-forward investment that will reap numerous benefits for the nation. Thank you for your consideration of this important application.

Best regards,  
Lid I-5 Steering Committee