

**Confederated Tribes *of the*  
Umatilla Indian Reservation**

Department of Economic and Community Development



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March 22, 2022

The Honorable Peter 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 City of Pendleton's request for federal funding to complete the Southgate Interchange Improvements Project. This is a key priority for our region that will address significant safety concerns along two major freight corridors, while enabling economic development and access for Pendleton's rural community divided by the federal interstate.

The Southgate Interchange is located at the confluence of Interstate 84 and U.S. Highway 395 in the rural eastern Oregon community of Pendleton. Under its current construction, the Interchange is failing to meet its purpose of safely and efficiently facilitating traffic between these two highways while connecting downtown Pendleton with the residential and commercial areas of the City separated by the Interstate. The close proximity of the interchange to the ramp terminals of Exit 209 on I-84 coupled with high traffic flow along Southgate (US 395) creates consistent traffic backups onto the highway from off-ramps that place Interstate traffic at risk and prevent safe passage off the highway through Pendleton. Furthermore, traveling to employment opportunities and other daily destinations almost always requires Pendleton residents to travel through the Southgate Interchange area. Residents routinely face congestion and dangerous intersection failures that delay trips or require traveling significant distances to the east or west to avoid the interchange.

Grant funds will be used to reconstruct the Interchange by extending access ramps off the Interstate, expanding Southgate capacity, and improving intersections that facilitate traffic flow from Interstate access ramps, Southgate, and connector roads throughout Pendleton. Completion of this project will turn this failing interchange into an asset for the region by reducing congestion, spurring economic development, and ensuring safe travel of freight, passenger vehicle, pedestrian, and bicycle traffic.

We strongly support the City's request and appreciate your consideration of the benefits this investment would bring to our region.

Sincerely,

William Tovey  
Director of Economic and Community Development