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Honorable Matt Watkins, Mayor of Pasco
Pasco City Hall
525 N. Third Ave.
Pasco, WA 99301

April 27, 2016

Dear Mayor Watkins

RE: Letter of Support for the City of Pasco Lewis Street Project

Thank you for this opportunity to note Tri Cities Hispanic Chamber of Commerce support for the Lewis Street undercrossing project in seeking federal grant funding. This project is of great importance to the Hispanic Chamber because it would provide better access to the downtown cultural and business districts, which would, in turn, benefit our members economically and socially.

The current Lewis Street undercrossing of the BNSF rail yard, which was built in 1937, is a narrow undercrossing with an adjacent pedestrian pathway. The structure does not meet ADA requirements, is structurally deficient and does not meet design standards – with no shoulders and very narrow lanes. The City has been seeking funding to replace this undercrossing with an overcrossing that spans the rail yard and also provides a safe connection for bikes and pedestrians.

Downtown Pasco is a designated Historically Underutilized Business (HUB) area with strong representation of minority and low income residents and businesses. The success of the HUB as well as economic redevelopment of Pasco depends on reliable connections, especially Lewis Street. Lewis Street provides important connections and if rebuilt provides an important connection for transit, pedestrian, and bike modes that serve low income and minority populations.

Lewis Street is an important east-west connection for economic development. It connects the business downtown to the west with the Port and industrial development areas in the east. Lewis Street is an important link to meet the community and regional growth and if rebuilt as a modern structure to current design standards, can accommodate trucks, bikes and emergency vehicles.

Lewis Street is a key connection for the Pasco Street network. The Lewis Street undercrossing structure under the BNSF railyard is in a poor state of repair. Even if it were repaired it does not meet ADA design standards for pedestrians and does not adequately accommodate buses, trucks, or bikes. If the Lewis Street undercrossing structure fails or becomes unusable, all trips including autos, bike, bus, truck and pedestrian would be detoured or diverted increasing total vehicle miles and emissions. Replacing the Lewis Street structure over the BNSF railyard would provide

for a complete street network accommodating all modes and providing system redundancy and a critical connection for emergency vehicles.

In 2015, the Washington state legislature approved a 16-year package of transportation earmarks including \$15 million dollars for replacing the Lewis Street undercrossing in the 2019/2021 biennium. This investment brings this long needed improvement closer to reality. With matching grant investments like TIGER and FASTLANE, this project can transform and renew Pasco.

Respectfully,

Sarah Del Toro

Sarah Del Toro
President
Tri Cities Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
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