June 9, 2021


Chairman Peter DeFazio       The Honorable Rick Larsen   The Honorable Marilyn Strickland
2134 Rayburn HOB             2113 Rayburn HOB            1004 Longworth HOB
Washington, D.C. 20515       Washington, D.C. 20515      Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Members of Congress:

We are writing to thank you for your support for transportation and infrastructure funding and your leadership to ensure that smaller- and medium-sized cities have access to critical federal funding to complete the regional transportation projects for our communities.

We represent cities that have tremendous infrastructure and transportation needs that make up integral parts of a regional transportation system in the Pacific Northwest. We are concerned that the draft INVEST Act perpetuates a funding system that leaves medium-sized cities behind. We know that if new federal competitive grant programs are established without a set-aside for medium sized cities, that funding opportunity is inaccessible for most of us. For example, since the establishment of the RAISE grant program in 2009 (first known as TIGER and then as BUILD), not a single grant has been awarded to a city in Washington State between 10,000 and 75,000 in population.

When Congress marks up the INVEST Act this week, we encourage Congress to rectify this by creating a set-aside for medium-sized cities in the federal transportation grants akin to the rural set-aside that currently exists.

Specifically, we request the following changes to the INVEST Act:

1. **Adjust the suballocation population bands**. The INVEST Act creates new suballocation population bands in the Surface Transportation Programs (Section 1205) in four levels: under 5,000, between 5,000 and 50,000, between 50,000 and 200,000 and cities above 200,000. We request these bands be adjusted to better create equitable opportunities for communities by establishing the suballocation population bands at under 10,000, between 10,000 and 75,000, between 75,000 and 200,000 and cities above 200,000.

   This change is critical to communities in Washington and Oregon to ensure that equitable access to grant funding remains available. In Oregon, there are only five cities between 50,000 and 75,000 in population size. In Washington, that number is ten. These 15 cities would have to compete with cities as large as Salem, Eugene, Vancouver, Everett and Bellevue without changes being made to suballocation population bands.

   We believe the appropriate size for a medium-sized city population band is between 10,000 and 75,000 in population size.

2. **Create a Medium-Sized City Set-Aside in the New Grant Programs**. The INVEST Act proposes the creation of new grant programs with a set aside of 25% of the funding for

rural areas and an additional 25% set aside for cities between 50,000 and 200,000 in population size. This allocation formula would eliminate this funding opportunity for non-rural cities below 50,000 in population size and perpetuates a funding system that leaves medium-sized cities behind. We request that the 25% set aside allocation be adjusted to cities between 10,000 and 75,000 in population size.

These grant programs include the Community Transportation Investment Grant Program (Section 1302), the Climate Innovation Grant Program (Section 1304) and the Transportation Connectivity Grant Program (Section 1309).

3. **Prioritize Funding in the New Grant Programs for Cities Experiencing Growth**. We strongly support program criteria in these new grant programs that would prioritize funding for cities experiencing growth. Growth should be determined by the appropriate metropolitan planning organization based on population growth and traffic mitigation growth (including measuring by housing density growth, economic impact, job creation and diversity and equity for underserved communities). This will ensure that communities that are experiencing growth have access to funding programs designed to link growth to transit expansion and mitigate the impacts of sprawl. This will also align grant award criteria for these proposed new programs with the RAISE program criteria.

If these changes are adopted into the INVEST Act as it moves through Congress, this would create a dedicated set-aside of grant program funding for cities between 10,000 and 75,000 in population size. Doing so would allow our communities to compete for critical federal funds on an equitable basis rather than having to compete with larger cities.

We note that the draft INVEST Act creates two new grant programs specifically for large cities (Section 1306 to solve specific congestion challenges) and for rural communities (Section 1307 to fund rural infrastructure). The INVEST Act should ensure that existing grant programs are accessible to medium-sized entities and that proposed new programs do not further the inequity within the existing system.

Congress has recognized the need to equitably fund infrastructure by creating a rural set-aside and creating population bands within the proposed INVEST Act for Surface Transportation funding. We request that you and your colleagues amend the INVEST Act and extend these policies into codified set-asides so that medium-sized cities, too, can access these critical federal funds.

Thank you for your consideration of this request and please contact any of us directly with any questions.
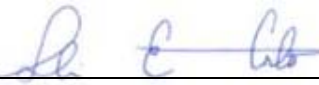
Sincerely,


Mayor Kyoko Matsumoto Wright                    Mayor Pete Schave
City of Mountlake Terrace                        City of Aberdeen
Population 21,660                                 Population 16,890

Mayor Laurie Gere
City of Anacortes
Population 17,830

Mayor Adrian Cortes
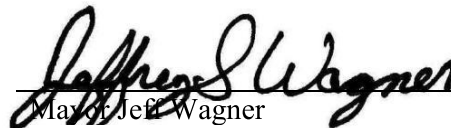City of Battle Ground
Population 22,180

Mayor Greg Wheeler
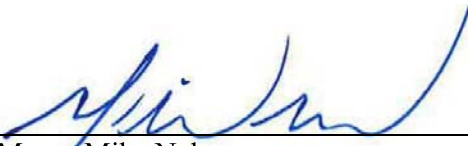City of Bremerton
Population 41,750

Mayor Pro Tem Ellen Burton
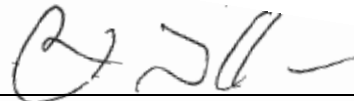City of Camas
Population 25,140

Mayor Biff Traber
City of Corvallis
Population 58,100

Mayor Jeff Wagner
City of Covington
Population 20,530

Mayor Mike Nelson
City of Edmonds
Population 42,470

Mayor Bruce Tabb
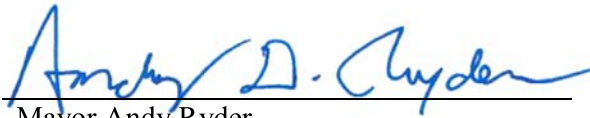City of Ellensburg
Population 20,640

Mayor Jan Molinaro
City of Enumclaw
Population 12,190

Mayor Greg Hansen
City of Ferndale
Population 14,600

Mayor Kim Roscoe
City of Fife
Population 10,100

Mayor David Baker
City of Kenmore
Population 23,450
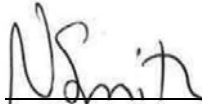
Mayor Andy Ryder
City of Lacey
Population 52,910
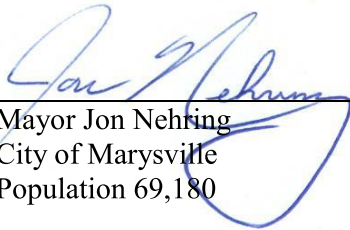
Mayor Jeff Johnson
City of Lake Forest Park
Population 13,280
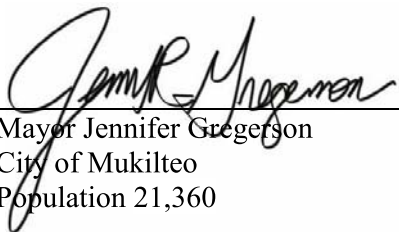
Mayor Don Anderson
City of Lakewood
Population 60,030

Mayor Nicola Smith
City of Lynnwood
Population 40,690

Mayor Jon Nehring
City of Marysville
Population 69,180

Mayor Jill Boudreau
City of Mount Vernon
Population 36,050

Mayor Jennifer Gregerson
City of Mukilteo
Population 21,360

Mayor Cheryl Selby
City of Olympia
Population 54,150

Mayor Kate Dexter
City of Port Angeles
Population 19,710
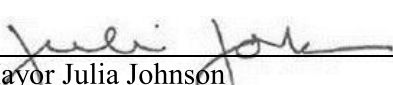
Mayor Robert Putaansuu
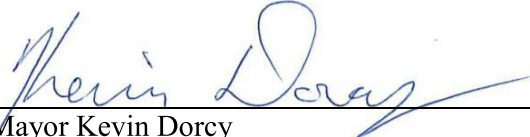City of Port Orchard
Population 14,770

Mayor Rebecca Erickson
City of Poulsbo
Population 11,550

Mayor Erin Sitterley
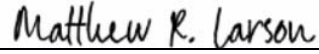City of SeaTac
Population 29,180

Mayor Julia Johnson
City of Sedro-Woolley
Population 11,890

Mayor Kevin Dorcy
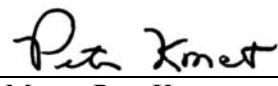City of Shelton
Population 10,390

Mayor Will Hall
City of Shoreline
Population 56,980

Mayor Matt Larson
City of Snoqualmie
Population 13,662

Mayor Jason Snider
City of Tigard
Population 54,520

Mayor Pete Kmet
City of Tumwater
Population 24,600

Mayor Tom Scribner
City of Walla Walla
Population 34,400

NOTE: All Washington city population sizes taken from the April 1, 2020 Office of Financial Management population estimates. All Oregon city population size estimates taken from the Population Research Center at Portland State University report dated April 15, 2021.