

June 14, 2007

US Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration
Office of Acquisition Management
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

RE: Grant Application for 20.205, *“Integrating Transportation & Resource Planning to Develop Ecosystem Based Infrastructure Projects”*

On behalf of our city, county, federal, state, and community-based project partners, Lane Council of Governments (LCOG) is pleased to submit the enclosed application for Federal Highway Administration grant funding of The Highway 126 Corridor Project.

OR 126 is the primary route connecting the central Oregon Coast to the Eugene-Springfield metropolitan area in the southern Willamette Valley (Oregon’s second-largest metropolitan area) and is critical in regard to regional connectivity in southwest Oregon. Outside of the Eugene urbanized area, traffic volume along the corridor is heaviest between Veneta and Eugene, due to the concentrated urban development in Eugene and rapid growth in residential development in Veneta. Vested interest by a multitude of agencies—and the communities—in this stretch of 126 is tremendously high, as are the environmental concerns. Sensitive resources include a number of listed and candidate plants, osprey nesting areas, and extensive wetland habitat (including a 3,000-acre urban wetland) used by pond turtles and other aquatic wildlife. This segment contains an exceptional mix of remnant Willamette valley grassland plants associated with native prairie wetlands that historically covered much of the area. No other highway segment in the Willamette valley compares to this one in terms of rare plants. And conflicts with natural resources near the highway may be highest along this segment.

LCOG is a voluntary association of cities, the county and special purpose districts (water, library, education, etc.) in Lane County. We serve as a regional planning, coordination, program development and service delivery organization because members recognize that local issues often cross jurisdictional boundaries and can be most effectively addressed by communities working together. Our workforce provides technology and planning services in areas such as small city and urban planning, natural resources, economic development, community development, transportation (including MPO management), and geographic information services. We look forward to facilitating an integrated and *Eco-Logical* approach to collaborative partnering and transportation planning for this critical area.

Sincerely,

George Kloeppe
Executive Director

Patrick Lanning, Chair
LCOG Board of Directors