

October 24, 2011

Mr. Ray LaHood, Secretary of Transportation  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE  
Washington, DC 20590

# COEUR D'ALENE

A CITY OF EXCELLENCE

**MAYOR**  
Sandi Bloem

**COUNCIL MEMBERS**  
John Bruning

Ron Edinger

Deanna Goodlander

Al Hassell

Mike Kennedy

Woody McEvers

RE: Port of Northern Montana Multimodal Hub Center TIGER III Application

Dear Mr. Secretary,

This letter conveys the City of Coeur d' Alene's support for the Port of Northern Montana Multimodal Hub Center project, for which the Northern Express Transportation Authority has requested \$9,998,910 in TIGER III grant funding. Federal funds will be combined with a \$7,346,558 non-federal match that has been committed to the project and dedicated to completing it.


This project is the first phase of an ultimate corridor clearance initiative that will make improvements to the Great Northern Rail Corridor and allow the handling of high and wide wind energy components being imported from the Pacific Rim and destined for projects located in the northern tier and mid-western states. Ultimately, the project will also facilitate the export of domestically manufactured wind energy components and containerized agricultural products through our Pacific Northwest Ports.

Currently, the Great Northern Rail Corridor which is owned and operated by the BNSF Railway Company, is only capable of handling wind energy components up to 13 feet-two (2) inches in diameter because of physical limitations created by tunnels and snow sheds located along the mountainous route. This project will increase tunnel sizes and modify snow sheds to accommodate loads in excess of 14 feet-zero (0) inches which is becoming the industry standard for shipping wind energy components by rail.

Phase I involves the construction of a multimodal hub in Shelby, Montana that is large enough to accommodate full length wind tower unit and intermodal trains. Funds would be used to construct 10,860 linear feet of rail track, 3,600 feet of new access roads and a 20 acre laydown yard capable of receiving unit train deliveries of wind tower components.

The project is 100 percent ready to go. It has received all required environmental clearances including Categorical Exclusions from the Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Railroad Administration. As funding applications are evaluated, I would hope that you would carefully consider the project's merits.

Best regards,

  
Sandi Bloem  
Mayor

