



**REGIONAL SOLUTIONS OFFICE  
GOVERNOR KATE BROWN**

May 6, 2020

The Honorable Elaine Chao, Secretary  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Chao:

I am writing this letter on behalf of the Greater Eastern Oregon Regional Solutions Advisory Board to express our support of the City of John Day's application to the U.S. Department of Transportation's Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) program. The City's grant request would support the City's broader John Day Innovation Gateway plan that is seeking to reverse the economic decline that the community has faced since the loss of timber jobs over twenty years ago. Specifically the grant would aim to integrate a new connected grid of streets and trails with development possibilities, including housing, office space and recreational uses.

The City of John Day is a distressed rural community that has experienced a number of socio-economic problems including the highest unemployment rate in Oregon since 2012, low real market property values and assessed values and a struggle to find sufficient revenue to fund basic public services. The City of John Day's strategy is to reverse the pattern of population and economic decline by achieving a modest and sustainable growth rate, which will be supported by this grant's funding of critical transportation infrastructure.

BUILD grant funds will be used to extend Seventh Street from Northwest Bridge Street to Northwest Patterson Bridge Road to connect to the north side of the City, along with a network of trails along the John Day River and adjacent natural areas. Most importantly, this project will give the City of John Day three bridges to the north side of the city compared to the one bridge they currently have. This will not only relieve congestion but it will improve emergency vehicle access. This project has been planned and developed through the Transportation Growth Management grant program funded by the Oregon Department of Transportation and the Oregon Department of Land and Conservation Development.

Regional Solutions is an economic and community development collaborative based in the Governor's office and including state community development agencies. We work with the private sector, foundations, and local, state and federal government to coordinate and leverage

**EASTERN OREGON REGIONAL SOLUTIONS CENTER**  
EASTERN OREGON UNIVERSITY  
233 BADGLEY HALL, ONE UNIVERSITY BLVD., LA GRANDE, OR 97850



public investments to address regional priorities for Eastern Oregon. The Greater Eastern Oregon Regional Solutions Advisory Board has worked closely with the City of John Day over the past few years as they have developed their economic development strategy and Innovation Gateway project. The state has been a key funding partner in the City of John Day and while they are a small, rural community, they have proved to be a good investment and project manager. We believe that they would be an excellent example for other rural communities who are seeking to reverse the economic decline that so many of our rural communities are facing.

This award will support the rural economy of the City of John Day and eastern Oregon, and increase the economic competitiveness of the region. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Courtney Crowell, Eastern Oregon Region Coordinator  
Regional Solutions  
Office of Governor Kate Brown

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 18, 2020

Honorable Elaine Chao  
Secretary of Transportation  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, S.E.  
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Secretary Chao:

We write today to express our support of the City of John Day's application for funding for the John Day Innovation Gateway Economic Revitalization project utilizing the Department of Transportation's Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) program.

This project is focused on enhancing regional connectivity and safe, efficient infrastructure, which are critical foundations for a thriving economy. The application by the City of John Day requests funds for developing a network of streets that will support a diversity of uses in addition to driving, such as public transit, walking, and biking.

The Innovation Gateway Economic Revitalization project is needed to help activate John Day's main street, boost the local economy, provide access to workforce housing, and replace deteriorating bridges. With BUILD funding, John Day will develop new parking areas on Main Street; improve local streets and an intersection; construct bridges that will provide access for walkers and bikers; and restore an existing bridge so that emergency vehicles will be able to cross. Bridge improvements will have the added benefit of increasing flood resilience for the community. In addition, funds from the BUILD grant would be used to construct turn-lanes from Highway 26 into the John Day Innovation Gateway and will assist with the parking and driveways for the Gateway's future event center, distillery, and hotel. In summary, these changes will improve the experiences of local residents and visitors alike.

The goals of this project are consistent with the intent of the BUILD program to fund high-impact transportation investments that increase access to safe and affordable transportation; facilitate economic growth and competitiveness; contribute to environmental sustainability; and promote regional connectivity. An investment in the City of John Day's project is an investment in Oregon's economic future.

Thank you for your full and fair consideration of the John Day Innovation Gateway Economic Revitalization project. If you have any questions regarding this matter, please contact Kathleen Cathey in Senator Wyden's La Grande office at (541) 962-7691, or Jessica Keys in Senator Merkley's Baker City office at (541) 278-1129.

Sincerely,



Ron Wyden  
United States Senator



Jeffery A. Merkley  
United States Senator



**Oregon**  
Kate Brown, Governor

**Department of Transportation**  
**Region 5**  
3012 Island Avenue  
La Grande, OR 97850  
(541) 963-3177  
FAX (541) 963-9709

May 8, 2020

The Honorable Elaine L. Chao, Secretary  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, DC 20590

Dear: Secretary Chao;

The Oregon Department of Transportation Region 5 encompasses that eastern third of Oregon. We partner with 46 Cities and nine different Counties to develop and maintain a multimodal transportation system that connects people and helps Oregon's communities and economy thrive. Through these interactions, we have a long standing relationship with the City of John Day and support their request for assistance through the USDOT BUILD Transportation Discretionary Grant Program to improve and develop key multimodal transportation infrastructure.

To provide context for this request and why we support the John Day Innovation Gateway project, it is important to understand the economy and history of Eastern Oregon. The Eastern Oregon economy is strongly dependent upon natural resource industries such as farming, livestock production and timber. Some communities we serve are located in areas that are well served by a mix of transportation types such as freeway, marine transport and rail. Those economies have been able to diversify and reduce reliance on natural resource industries. Other communities are more restricted and have had a historic reliance on single industries. That has been a challenge for more rural communities as they adapt to a post-timber economy. When natural disasters occur, such as the Federal Disaster declared for the 2019 Floods in Oregon, it affects these communities, including John Day, much harder.

The City of John Day has been forward thinking and innovative in their plans to recover from past economic hardships to become a thriving and resilient community. They have planned for a future in taking a large abandoned industrial property and repurposing it to create key economic assets that will sustain John Day's economy going forward. This is a big change, but has been developed by the community with strong support from the citizen and many partners (including private partnerships of approximately 7 million dollars), who are excited to see the vision of creating jobs and community through their effort to provide:

- Broadband expansion and network modernization
- Workforce Housing
- Innovation Gateway Industrial Site and Grid Modernization
- Hotel and Event Center/ Distillery development
- Flood Mitigation and Environmental Restoration
- Community Pavilion
- Hydroponic Greenhouse Learning Center

To support this larger vision, important multimodal investments are needed. This BUILD request will construct three new miles new street improvements, including new streets, an intersection, repairing and repurposing a bridge for pedestrian river crossing and new multimodal bridges over the John Day River that will serve vehicles, pedestrians, and transit. The street network will be expanded to provide transportation in a number of forms to previously inaccessible or underserved parts of John Day. Specifically the improvements associated with the BUILD grant include:

- 5,400 linear feet of new arterial streets
- 6,282 linear feet of new collector streets
- 3,354 linear feet of new local streets
- One intersection safety improvement project
- Structural improvements to an existing (out of service) bridge to return it to use for bikes, pedestrians, and emergency/service vehicles
- One new bridge for vehicles, bikes and pedestrian
- Two new bridge for bikes, pedestrians and transit stops
- Two new downtown parking areas in the down town area.

Each of these individual elements of the project proposal are valuable improvements to John Day community. Together, each of these project components combine to implement a strong, multi-faceted transportation infrastructure strategy that will help John Day recover economically and thrive going forward. ODOT has partnered with Oregon's Department of Land Conservation and Development and the City of John Day on a recently adopted Transportation Growth Management (TGM) plan that identified a wide range of transportation needs for this portion of the community and make prioritized transportation improvements associated with the proposed project. With this background work completed, and private public partnerships in place, we strongly support this application and the improvements that would result from this important work. This is a project that will bring vital economic recovery and livability to John Day and if awarded, will be a highly visible and successful example of how the US Department of Transportation can help communities develop a well-planned and much needed transportation network. Thank you for your consideration of this project request.

Respectfully,



Craig Sipp, Region Manager  
ODOT Region 5  
3012 Island Avenue  
La Grande, OR 97850





**Extension Service – Grant County  
Open Campus**

Oregon State University  
116 NW Bridge Street, Suite 1  
John Day, Oregon, 97845

**P** 541-575-1911 | **F** 541-575-2248  
[extension.oregonstate.edu/grant](http://extension.oregonstate.edu/grant)

5/11/2020

The Honorable Elaine L. Chao, Secretary  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, DC 20590

Greetings,

The BUILD Transportation Discretionary Grant program is a fantastic opportunity for our community to continue implementation, by way of infrastructure, of the John Day Strategy for Growth. This project not only accommodates infrastructure for future growth, it incorporates thoughtful and diverse connections that will boost our economy through a connected approach. Much needed infrastructure is important for the reality and effectiveness of this project. OSU Open Campus fully supports this project and application.

The proposal set forth will help diversify our economy by bringing recreation, tourism, and main street business together. As a team with this funding we can help our community recover from successive waves of economic hardship and decline to emerge stronger. Specifically, we would like to connect integrated parks and trails, and accessible recreation opportunities within the city with residents of all income levels and visitors alike. Oregon State University supports communities and development that reaches all residents and is culturally relevant to the local area.

As a land grant University, Oregon State is instrumental in collaborations for resilient and healthy communities. Healthy communities require access and connectivity. Welcoming visitors with strategically placed parking as well as creating safe and useable parking for other transportation like biking is essential for our tourism access and hospitality industry. The bridges designed for connecting parks and trails will create a mode of livability for all locals and visitors.

This grant opportunity would provide numerous advances in infrastructure by connecting the multiple arteries in the city thereby promoting economics, tourism, and recreation. These diverse and unique parts of the community will strengthen the economic vitality and reach beyond John Day and influence the entire region.

Thank you for considering the application. Open Campus is in full support of this ongoing project and this important component supported by the BUILD application. I am happy to provide any further support or answer questions if you would like to contact me at 541 575 4028, or [mccrackd@oregonstate.edu](mailto:mccrackd@oregonstate.edu).

Thank you,

DocuSigned by:  
*Didgette McCracken*

478709076C71492...

Didgette McCracken  
Grant County Open Campus Coordinator  
Oregon State University

May 8, 2020

**The Honorable Elaine L. Chao, Secretary  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, DC 20590**

**RE: Letter of Support for the City of John Day 2020 BUILD Grant Application**

Dear Honorable Elaine L. Chao, Secretary:

Grant County Economic Development is in full support of the City of John Day's application for the US Department of Transportation 2020 Build Grant. John Day is one of nine incorporated cities in Grant County and is the major hub, with the majority of the county residents employed there. However, the population of John Day has been in continual decline for over twenty years and will continue to do so if there is no effort to rebuild our city and improve the quality of life for current and future residents.

The City of John Day has worked tirelessly the last four years in acquiring funding for multiple projects to address the blight and economic devastation that has plagued our County since the timber industry plummeted in the 1990's. Some of the current projects that the City has implemented are addressing basic infrastructure needs, addressed in their Strategy for Growth.

With funding from the BUILD Transportation Discretionary Grant Program, the City of John day will be able to achieve their Strategy for Growth, going from population and economic decline to sustainable growth – by helping the City build a complete street network and transportation infrastructure that is more welcoming to all users, including walking, biking, driving, automobiles, and public transit. There will be multiple benefits to this project the City is funded, which include: improved flood resilience, workforce housing, quality of life improvements, economic expansion and private investment, new business growth and riverfront recreation at the Innovation Gateway location, and activating the City's Main Street,



*Grant County*  
**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

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541-575-1555

Now, more than ever, with the COVID-19 shutdown, the residents in the county are feeling the another wave of economic depression that could leave permanent damage to all the businesses in our community. It is essential that the City of John Day receive funding from the BUILD Grant 2020 to move forward during this time.

Grant County Economic Development pledges total support to the City of John Day in their efforts to rebuild and add to the county's assets. The John Day City Manager, Nick Green, has worked diligently to better the community he lives in. He has helped the city develop a vision and now he is working to implement that vision into a reality.

Grant County Economic Development supports the City's efforts to achieve the goals in their Strategy for Growth. Thank you in advance for your consideration to help make John Day and Grant County a better place to live, work and recreate. Thank you for your time and consideration. If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at (541) 575-1555 or [allison.field@grantcountyoregon.net](mailto:allison.field@grantcountyoregon.net).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Allison Field', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Allison Field, Director  
Grant County Economic Development



## **Blue Mountain Hospital District**

170 Ford Road, John Day, OR 97845  
BlueMountainHospital.org

May 6, 2020

The Honorable Elaine L. Chao, Secretary  
US Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, DC 20590

RE: Letter of Support for the US DOT Build Grant Program

As Chief Executive Officer of Blue Mountain Hospital District (BMHD) I am very much in support of the City of John Day application for the US DOT Build Grant Program. Capital investment into the infrastructure of John Day is a crucial next step in improving transportation safety and access, extending roads to support highly needed new housing developments, and increasing economic growth in Grant County.

This grant program will benefit Grant County residents, as the City of John Day is the hub of the county. Grant County has undergone flooding, fire, and economic depression but is determined to survive. With the help of the US DOT Build Grant Program, the City of John Day will be able to provide improved flood resilience to a highly used area, provide needed housing for an underdeveloped housing shortage, improve economic expansion, provide needed parking to activate Main Street small businesses, and develop bridges and roads connecting neighborhoods with Blue Mountain Hospital, and enhance ambulance and emergency response access which is currently limited by existing transportation infrastructures across the John Day River. This program will also aid BMHD in our recruitment and retention efforts, and support several businesses.

It is projects and community improvements such as this that will improve our economy, the quality of life of our population, and enhance our ability to recruit and retain qualified healthcare personnel to our area. I am in full support of the City of John Day in its efforts surrounding this project and the US DOT Build Grant Program.

Sincerely,

Derek Daly,  
CEO Blue Mountain Hospital District

cc. City of John Day