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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

March 9, 2018

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Admiral Paul F. Zukunft
U.S. Coast Guard
2703 Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue SE
Washington, D.C. 20593-7000

Dear Admiral Zukunft:

I write in support of the Sandpoint Junction Connector Project. Considering the national economic importance and local benefits of the project, I urge the Coast Guard to undertake a thorough environmental review in as expeditious a manner as possible.


This critical project is located on the BNSF's Great Northern Corridor and serves as a major artery of trade and passenger rail service for Eastern Washington. These rail lines allow access to the Puget Sound and Columbia River Ports and are critical to U.S. agriculture exports and other shipments. BNSF has made hundreds of millions of dollars of investment in the Corridor. These investments have increased capacity east and west of the project, allowing them to more efficiently handle the rail freight that a growing economy requires.

Freight and passenger trains have moved safely over the existing bridge for more than a century. This important project will allow rail traffic to move safely in both directions simultaneously, reducing wait times for bridge crossings. Currently, backups created by waiting trains can sometimes extend for many miles. Reducing train delays will reduce delays in the surrounding area, improve air quality and reduce noise by cutting idle times when trains are stopped in Sandpoint.

I believe that the environmental approvals for this project are an example of the kind that can and should be executed in an efficient manner. I request the agencies avoid delays, which would add unnecessary costs to a privately financed project. I hope that the Coast Guard, Army Corps of Engineers, and state of Idaho environmental regulators can work together to accomplish this expeditiously.

Thank you for your consideration of my views in this matter.

Sincerely,



Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Member of Congress

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