

October 17, 2011

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

Belgrade East Interchange

Dear Secretary:

I would like to take this opportunity to write in support of the TIGER Grant for the Belgrade East Interchange. Like many small communities, Belgrade was built around the railroad. The city lies on both sides of the tracks with no "off grade" crossings. This provides challenges for everything from school bus routes to emergency vehicle travel. The proposed interchange would provide an off-grade crossing at the east end of the community.

I have a unique perspective on the emergency vehicle issue. Three years ago I fell 15 ft. from a ladder. I was completely paralyzed except for my left hand. My family responded immediately and within minutes I heard the sirens as the ambulance left the barn. At some point I realized that the sirens no longer were sounding and the only thing I could hear was the whistle of a 110 car unit train moving slowly through town. Nearly 10 minutes later the sirens started again as the train cleared the crossings. I was extremely lucky, the paramedics stabilized me, transported me to the hospital and a spinal specialist was able to realign my neck quickly. Quick action has left me with minimal impairment. I can think of numerous situations that may occur that might not have a similar outcome.

The Belgrade East Interchange is extremely important the safety, economy and growth of our community. Please carefully consider granting the TIGER grant for the Belgrade Interchange.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Youngberg". The signature is stylized with a large, looping initial "J" and a long, sweeping underline.

John Youngberg, Councilman
Ward 3, City of Belgrade