

DAN NEWHOUSE
4TH DISTRICT, WASHINGTON
www.newhouse.house.gov

504 CANNON HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
OFFICE (202) 225-5816
FAX (202) 225-3251

CHAIRMAN
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Congress of the United States House of Representatives

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
APPROPRIATIONS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE,
RURAL DEVELOPMENT, FOOD AND DRUG
ADMINISTRATION, AND RELATED
AGENCIES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND WATER
DEVELOPMENT AND RELATED AGENCIES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

April 27, 2022

Dear Chair DeLauro and Ranking Member Granger:

I am requesting funding for Benton City in fiscal year 2023. The entity to receive funding for this project is Benton City, located at 708 9th Street Benton City WA 99320. The Benton City Rail Trail Project will be centered on the railway bridge crossing the Yakima River and connecting Benton City's incorporated residential area to the Red Mountain AVA to the east. In the last phase of the project, a 7-mile trail will connect the Rail Trail Bridge, Riverfront Park, and the Tri-Cities Regional Trail System. Benton City is a small, rural town in Benton County, Washington, with a population of 3,337 people. According to the CDC Social Vulnerability Index, Prosser earned a score of .70 (moderate to highly vulnerable). A diverse community with a rich cultural heritage, Prosser's residents come from a variety of backgrounds including Hispanic (36.62%) and Native American (1.9%).

The funding would be used for Just east of Benton City, two tourist destinations are drawing visitors to the region: the 2,300-acre Red Mountain AVA, home to 54 vineyards, and the 23-mile Tapteal Trail. But while the city stands to gain from both the wine and recreation industries, residents and tourists cannot explore without a car. The only route from Benton City across the Yakima River is the existing WA-225 bridge, built in the '60s and intended for vehicular traffic only.

Benton City residents are also concerned about their health. According to a 2019 Community Health Needs Assessment, residents (including children and teens) have a higher BMI than their fellow Washingtonians; they also have higher diabetes, asthma, and suicide rates (pgs. 9-10). Due to these risk factors, Benton City earned a score of .70 (moderate to high) on the CDC Social Vulnerability Index for COVID-19.

Residents want a healthier community where people can be "outside playing, walking, [and] being active." The local economy, likewise, needs a cornerstone project to create jobs and recover wages lost during the pandemic. The city's answer: the creation of a Rail Trail connecting the city center with the wineries and trails.

Benton City has already fostered a walking and cycling culture within the city, establishing a 2-mile city walking and cycling path, and developing Riverfront Park (which will serve as the gateway to the Rail Trail). However, as a small, rural community with limited resources, Benton City cannot finish the Rail Trail without the financial assistance of a federal appropriation.

I certify that neither I nor my immediate family has any financial interest in this project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Dan Newhouse".

Dan Newhouse
Member of Congress