



June 25, 2019

Elaine L. Chao
Secretary of Transportation
United States Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave., SE
Washington, DC 20590

Re: United States Department of Transportation, Better Utilizing Investment to Leverage Development (BUILD) Grant 2019: Riverside Drive Multimodal Revitalization Corridor Project

Dear Ms. Chao:

Please accept this letter in support of the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission's request for a 2019 BUILD grant. The grant funding is imperative to the implementation of the more than \$50 million Riverside Drive Multimodal Revitalization Corridor project.

The collaboration of more than 20 local, public, private and non-profit organizations, Riverside Drive will be a 3.25-mile project that reclaims a vacant rail bed to become a centerpiece of a more than \$300 million brownfields redevelopment project known as the Waterfront, in the City of Allentown.

The project's ADA accessible design connects Allentown residents, commuters, recreational trail users and tourists from established commercial and mixed-use developments to the new cultural, recreational and urban redevelopment projects occurring along Allentown's waterfront.

It will close Pennsylvania's highest priority trail gap, providing a critical commuting link in the 165-mile Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor Trail network and offering an alternative travel option to regional trail systems. It improves connectivity between rural and urban areas of the Lehigh Valley and eastern Pennsylvania, providing a new commuting corridor to job centers, while strengthening the spine of the region's recreational trail network.

For more than a decade, the Allentown Economic Development Corporation performed environmental remediation projects on sites at the southern portion of the Waterfront totaling more than 15 acres. This work set the stage for the significant redevelopment opportunities now occurring. The Riverside Drive Project will help to support this new development while connecting residents from some of Allentown's lowest income neighborhoods to the regions assets and employment opportunities. We ask for your favorable consideration of this vital project.

Sincerely,

R. Scott Unger
Executive Director