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June 28, 2019

Ms. 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:

I am sending this letter to offer the City of Allentown's full support for 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 two-lane thoroughfare, paired with a 10-foot hiking and biking commuter trail, will provide the connective tissue for a project that will include a Riverwalk, public plazas, floating docks and a Main Street through an office and housing development on the former site of the long-closed Lehigh Structural Steel.

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 smart growth 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.

The Riverside Drive Multimodal Corridor project will only have a limited impact without the Whitehall Township connection funded through the BUILD grant. The BUILD grant is the critical component to funding a project that has tremendous regional impact. Allentown is in the final stages of our new comprehensive and economic development plan update entitled *Allentown Vision 2030*, which has repeatedly identified access to parks, biking routes and trail infrastructure as critical to the City's future potential. This BUILD grant request is in full alignment with the *Allentown Vision 2030* plan to be released in winter 2019.

We offer our full support for this dynamic multimodal project that we believe will not only provide greater access to all Lehigh Valley residents but accelerate Allentown's renaissance as the third largest city in Pennsylvania. Whether linking workers to their jobs, rural to urban, consumers to the businesses, or goods to the deliverers - this investment transcends social and economic barriers.

Sincerely,



Ray O'Connell
Interim Mayor