



Office of the Mayor
Salvatore J. Panto, Jr.
Mayor

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July 15, 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:

We're writing to offer our 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.

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.

We offer our support for a project we believe will not only provide greater access to all residents, but continue the rebirth of the Lehigh Valley's urban core.

The connection of this missing link is important to the entire Lehigh Valley and its three urban core communities of Allentown, Bethlehem and Easton. Just recently the City of Easton has been able to attract the Hearst Publishing Company to our central business district primarily because of the location's close proximity to the heritage trail.

Thank you for your consideration of this important request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Salvatore J. Panto Jr." with a stylized flourish at the end.

Salvatore J. Panto Jr.
Mayor, City of Easton PA