



pennsylvania environmental council

July 8, 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:

As a statewide leader in trail development, the Pennsylvania Environmental Council (PEC) supports the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission's 2019 BUILD grant application for funding to implement the Riverside Drive Multimodal Revitalization Corridor project. The collaboration of more than 20 public, private and non-profit organizations, Riverside Drive will transform a 3.25-mile-long vacant rail bed into the centerpiece of a more than \$300 million brownfields redevelopment project known as the Waterfront, in the City of Allentown, Pennsylvania.

PEC embraces the importance of establishing regional trail connections and is committed to making trails accessible for urban citizens in underserved communities. In terms of population, Allentown is Pennsylvania's third largest city, with residents representing diverse cultural and socio-economic backgrounds. Over 40 percent of Allentown's population is Hispanic or Latino, and over 25 percent of the city's residents live at or below the poverty level. Considering these unique demographic factors, PEC believes that the Riverside Drive Multimodal Revitalization Corridor will impact the City of Allentown in positive and significant ways.

Riverside Drive is a significant trail gap in Pennsylvania, which once completed, will offer a valuable alternative travel option for both commuting and recreation. The corridor will improve connectivity between rural and urban areas of the Lehigh Valley metropolitan area and will even link with the 165-mile Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor Trail, as well as with Greater Philadelphia's Circuit Trails, strengthening the spine of Southeastern Pennsylvania's trail network.

Whether linking workers to jobs, rural to urban, consumers to businesses, or goods to deliverers – Riverside Drive transcends social and economic barriers. Therefore, PEC offers support for an investment that will provide greater access for Allentown residents, continue the Lehigh Valley's urban renaissance, and enhance Pennsylvania's outdoor recreation amenities.

Sincerely,

Patrick Starr
Executive Vice President

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