

July 8, 2019

The Honorable 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 Secretary Chao:

As the largest hospital system in the greater Lehigh Valley, we care for thousands and thousands of people every year. We see the community health data results. It is undeniable that obesity plagues the Lehigh Valley, affecting all residents but with a growing impact on children. We need this to change. We need to create and support innovative programming and active recreational opportunities that allow people to become more active.

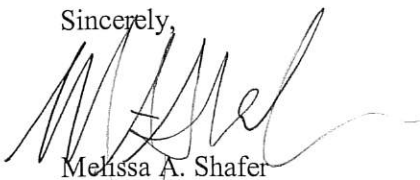
Therefore, we are fully supportive of the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission's request for a 2019 BUILD grant. This grant funding is imperative to the implementation of the more than \$50 million Riverside Drive Multimodal Revitalization Corridor project.

The 10-foot hiking and biking commuter trail along the corridor 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.

Five years ago, St. Luke's started a program called "Get Your Tail on the Trail." This is a free community wellness program that has won national acclaim for its unique approach to inspiring people to get outside and get walking, biking, hiking, and just plain moving, in order to get healthy. This program is a keystone in St. Luke's efforts to get people in our community "Fit For Life." Unfortunately, the current trail gap on the Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor Trail presents a barrier to those residents living in the Allentown area, especially to those lower income residents who do not have the ability to drive to another trailhead. This project would help close that trail gap in the City of Allentown and improve the health and welfare for residents of all economic backgrounds.

Thank you for your consideration of this important application.

Sincerely,



Melissa A. Shafer

Assistant Vice President Government Relations & Community Affairs