

February 15, 2024

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg, Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

On behalf of the Portland Area Comprehensive Transportation System (PACTS), the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Portland, Maine region, I write to express our support of the *Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity* (RAISE) Program application submitted by the Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT) for the *East Deering: Pathways to Bridge the Gap Project* (Project). This application is submitted in partnership with the City of Portland and the Initiative for Digital Engineering and Life Sciences.

The Project will expand, redesign, and improve active transportation and roadway infrastructure in the East Deering neighborhood of Portland, Maine—creating a critical link between East Deering, East Bayside, and the Old Port section of downtown Portland. The Project will improve community connectivity by:

- Creating new and restoring existing multi-use bike and pedestrian pathways that are safe, convenient, and modern to encourage active transportation;
- Upgrading neighborhood roads and intersections to conform with Complete Street principles; and
- Improving multimodal access to a growing education and technology campus.

The Project advances the goals of PACTS' long-range transportation plan by creating safer, more accessible transportation options in an underserved area of the region. The Project will introduce Complete Streets improvements to the East Deering and East Bayside neighborhoods, both defined as overburdened and underserved by the federal Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool (CEJST). The Project creates vital connections between those communities, which are bound by interstates and high-volume urban arterials, while creating a safer environment for active transportation users on Washington Avenue, one of the region's Vision Zero "critical safety corridors". The Project's proposed multi-use bridge aligns with PACTS' vision for an upcoming Regional Trail Plan, connecting the existing and proposed trail network and making it possible for residents and visitors to travel by foot, bike, or mobility-assisted device, ultimately helping reduce emissions and improve quality of life.

We are supportive of this transformational Project to support important neighborhood connections throughout Portland.

Communities working together to build shared and sustainable prosperity

Thank you for your strong consideration of MaineDOT's RAISE proposal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Kristina Egan', with a large, stylized initial 'K' and a long, sweeping horizontal stroke at the end.

Kristina Egan
Executive Director
Greater Portland Council of Governments (GPCOG)