



September 16, 2024

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

RE: Maine Department of Transportation's application to fund the *Franklin Street Redesign Planning Project in Portland, Maine* under the FY 2024–2026 Reconnecting Communities Pilot Program

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

On behalf of Avesta Housing, I write to express support for the Maine Department of Transportation's ("MaineDOT") Planning Grant application under the FY 2024–2026 Reconnecting Communities Pilot Program. The *Franklin Street Redesign Planning Project in Portland, Maine* ("Project") presents a critical opportunity to reconstruct the Franklin Street corridor in Portland, Maine, and reconnect communities impacted by past transportation decisions.

Franklin Street has a long and complex history that mirrors the urban renewal challenges faced by many American cities. Until the 1960s, Franklin Street was a two-lane city street home to thriving communities, including several immigrant and diverse populations. Through the 1970s, Franklin Street was rebuilt as a swift connection between I-295 and Portland's downtown and waterfront. The dramatic realignment resulted in the displacement of residents and business owners. That redesign also severed the neighborhood, cutting off connectivity to neighbors and everyday needs as well as preventing safe active transportation as an option.

The Project consists of completing the final phase of planning activities to reconstruct this critical corridor. The plans will expand upon two decades of conceptual planning and community engagement to re-envision Franklin Street. Project benefits include:

- Strengthened community connections through a restored street grid,
- Improved safety and accessibility for all transportation types,
- Enhanced climate resiliency through reduced car dependency and integrated green street infrastructure; and
- Increased opportunities for new mixed-use development and affordable housing.

Avesta Housing is a non-profit affordable housing developer, owner, and manager. Our mission is to improve lives and strengthen communities by promoting and providing quality affordable homes for people in need. We own and manage nine properties in the Munjoy Hill, East Bayside, and Bayside neighborhoods (303 homes) surrounding Franklin Arterial.

Along with providing the described benefits to current residents in the vicinity, this Project also unlocks the potential for more, critically needed affordable housing. Avesta Housing is excited to see it come to fruition with positive impacts on so many of our current and future residents.

Thank you for your strong consideration of the *Franklin Street Redesign Planning Project in Portland, Maine*.

Sincerely,



Rebecca Hatfield
President & CEO