

Planning and Urban Development
Kevin Kraft, AICP
Director



September 20, 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 the City of Portland's Planning and Urban Development Department, 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.

The Portland Planning Department has been involved in the planning for Franklin Street for over 15 years. The opportunity is now for reimagining how Franklin Street can contribute to reknitting the fabric of Portland back together while meeting city goals and critical needs such as safer transportation options for all users, creating opportunities for mixed use development including much needed housing in the center of

Portland with excellent access to public transit. The project will enhance Portland's sustainability and climate resiliency by reducing green house gas emissions, expand green stormwater infrastructure and reduce combined sewer outfalls into Portland Harbor.

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

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. Kraft', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Kevin Kraft, AICP
Director, Planning & Urban Development