

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,

Friends of Casco Bay supports 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.

Friends of Casco Bay is a community-oriented environmental organization whose mission is to improve and protect the environmental health of Casco Bay. We support the Project for a number of reasons. An important part of the project for Casco Bay will be the integration of an end-to-end sewer separation project that is focused on elimination of two combined sewer outfalls, one in Portland Harbor and one in the Back Cove. It will also integrate green stormwater infrastructure along its length. The Project has the potential, then, to reduce excess nitrogen and other pollutants into the Bay. 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.

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

With appreciation,



Will Everitt
Executive Director



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