

Friends of Lincoln Park

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September 13, 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 Friends of Lincoln Park, 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 negatively impacted by past transportation decisions. Of particular significance to our organization is the project's provision to return land taken from abutting Lincoln Park during the 1970's construction of Franklin Street, thereby restoring Portland's oldest and most historic park to its original intended size and configuration.

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 and significantly compromising a beloved park that served residents of the area.

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:

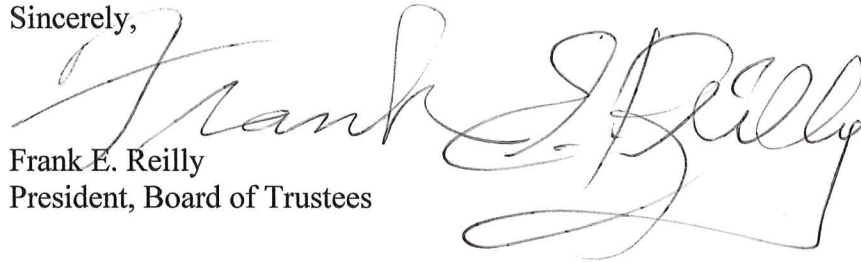
- Strengthened community connections through a restored street grid,
- Improved safety and accessibility for all transportation types,
- Enhanced climate resiliency through reduced car dependency and integrated green street infrastructure; and
- Increased opportunities for new mixed-use development and affordable housing.
- Restoration of abutting historic Lincoln Park to its original size and configuration.

Lincoln Park was created in 1866, immediately following the Great Fire of that year which destroyed much of the city. The park was initially called Phoenix Square, signifying a city that rises from the ashes. The next year it was renamed Lincoln Park in honor of the slain President.

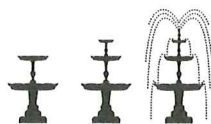
Friends of Lincoln Park was involved in the conceptual planning for Franklin Street's reconstruction. The concept plan, which included the return of approximately one quarter of Lincoln Park's land area removed to accommodate the layout of Franklin Street, was endorsed by the Portland City Council.

On behalf of the Friends of Lincoln Park, we fully support the reconstruction of Franklin Street and in that, the return of land to Lincoln Park. Thank you for your strong consideration of the ***Franklin Street Redesign Planning Project in Portland, Maine.***

Sincerely,



Frank E. Reilly
President, Board of Trustees



Trustees: Noni Ames . Deb Andrews . Frank E. Reilly . Sharon Reilly . Jeff Tarling