

September 10, 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 Portland Area Comprehensive Transportation System (PACTS), the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Portland, Maine region, I write to express our strong 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"), one of the region's top transportation priorities, presents a critical opportunity to reconstruct a corridor and reconnect communities who have been adversely impacted since the roadway's construction in the 1960s.

Franklin Street was once a two-lane city street home to thriving neighborhoods, including several immigrant communities. This changed in the 1960s and 1970s when Franklin Street was rebuilt as a swift connection between I-295 and Portland's downtown and waterfront. The dramatic realignment displaced residents and business owners and severed neighborhoods, inhibiting connectivity to everyday needs and creating an unsafe environment for active transportation users. In 2023, the region's Vision Zero Action Plan identified Franklin Street as a "Critical Safety Corridor".

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-define Franklin Street. The Project offers tremendous benefits, proposing to:

- Strengthen community connections in one of the region's "Equitable Target Areas" (PACTS Title VI Program),
- Restore the street grid on a regionally significant "Critical Safety Corridor" (PACTS Vision Zero Action Plan),
- Enhance climate resiliency through reduced car dependency and integrated green street infrastructure; and
- Increase opportunities for new mixed-use development and affordable housing.

The Project is prioritized in the region's long-range transportation plan for its safety, mobility, climate, economic development, and equity benefits. In addition to restoring the fabric of the City,

Communities working together to build shared and sustainable prosperity

the Project will create a more transit-friendly environment for a proposed bus rapid transit service that has recently received broad local, regional, and state support.

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

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Kristina Egan', with a stylized, flowing script.

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