

Health & Human Services

Shaza Stevenson

Interim Director

December 18, 2023



Dr. Alfredo Vergara

Public Health Director

2/15/24

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

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

On behalf of the City of Portland's Public Health Division, I write to express our support of the Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) Program application submitted by the Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT) for the East Deering: Pathways to Bridge the Gap Project (Project). This application is submitted in partnership with the City of Portland and the Initiative for Digital Engineering and Life Sciences.

The Project will expand, redesign, and improve active transportation and roadway infrastructure in the East Deering neighborhood of Portland, Maine—creating a critical link between East Deering and the Old Port section of downtown Portland. The Project will improve community connectivity by:

- Creating new and restoring existing multi-use bike and pedestrian pathways that are safe and modern to encourage active transportation;
- Upgrading neighborhood roads and intersections to conform with Complete Street principles; and
- Adjusting an interstate off-ramp to improve campus, transit and neighborhood traffic flow and alleviate impacts to a historic neighborhood and nearby disadvantaged communities.

The Healthy Eating Active Living (HEAL) program within Portland Public Health aims to help people live healthier lives by promoting good eating habits and regular physical activity. Our team works with schools, workplaces, and communities to make healthy choices easier. This includes things like setting nutrition standards, creating places to walk and bike, and offering programs that encourage healthy eating and exercise. HEAL also educates people about the

benefits of healthy living and provides resources to help them make healthier choices. We believe this project would significantly benefit the overall health of our community in the following ways:

- Improved Physical Health: Active transportation improves overall health and access to opportunities for physical activity.
- Improved Mental Health: Being active can boost your mood, reduce stress, anxiety, and depression, and make you feel better overall.
- Improved Community Connection: Improved infrastructure will help community members connect with others, improve neighborhood connections, and make communities more lively.

We are supportive of this transformational Project to support important neighborhood connections throughout Portland.

Thank you for your strong consideration of MaineDOT's RAISE proposal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alfredo Vergara', with a stylized, cursive script.

Alfredo Vergara, PhD
Director, Public Health Division
Department of Health and Human Services
City of Portland, ME