



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

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

On behalf of The Staying Connected Initiative partnership, I am writing in support of the application submitted by The Maine Department of Transportation to the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Wildlife Crossings Pilot Program for the proposed Caribou Wildlife and Aquatic Habitat Crossing Project.

The [Staying Connected Initiative](#) (SCI) is a unique assemblage of government, non-government, and academic partners working to sustain and enhance landscape connectivity at multiple scales across the Northern Appalachian / Acadian ecoregion, for the long-term benefit of people and wildlife. This region is the world's largest-remaining forest of its kind and a continental-scale priority for ecological connectivity, climate adaptation, and biodiversity conservation.

SCI partners work at multiple scales in the northeast U.S. and southeast Canada to safeguard native species and ecosystems from the impacts of habitat loss and fragmentation in a changing climate, and to support healthy, land-connected livelihoods, communities and cultures. SCI achieves these goals by pursuing an integrated approach to connectivity conservation and restoration involving multiple strategies, including conservation science, land protection and stewardship, and transportation planning and barrier mitigation.

The Caribou Wildlife and Aquatic Habitat Crossing Project in Caribou, Maine seeks to reduce Wildlife Vehicle Collisions (WVCs), remove barriers to fish and wildlife passage, improve habitat connectivity for terrestrial and aquatic species, and resolve flooding issues. This will be achieved primarily by replacing and improving the existing culvert, a complete barrier to wildlife passage surrounded by quality habitat on both sides, obstructing safe passage of terrestrial wildlife such as white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) and moose (*Alces alces*), which has resulted in multiple collisions on site. Enlarging the culvert will open several miles of upstream aquatic habitat to fish passage and enhance terrestrial connectivity between two large, undeveloped adjacent habitat blocks.

The site of the proposed project is within the Three Borders region, one of eleven priority SCI "linkages." Supported by decades of collaborative conservation science, SCI linkages are recognized by partners as critical for sustaining habitat connectivity at the large landscape, ecoregional, and continental scale. The Three Borders linkage joins northern Maine to western New Brunswick and eastern Quebec, connecting the Northern Appalachians with the extensive forests of the Gaspé Peninsula and the Canadian Maritime provinces to the east.

On behalf of our partners, I am pleased to support the Maine Department of Transportation's application.  
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mikael Cejtin".

Mikael Cejtin  
Coordinator, Staying Connected Initiative