



Serving the Municipalities of Southwestern Maine for Over 50 years

July 20, 2022

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
US Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

On behalf of Southern Maine Planning and Development Commission (SMPDC), I am writing in support of MaineDOT's application to the Bridge Investment Program Planning Grant, requesting federal funding for the development of the MaineDOT Off-System Bridge Investment Program.

The grant funds will enable MaineDOT to develop a program to replace off-system local bridges. Highlights of the program include standard designs, innovative materials and construction techniques, and investing in critical connections to underserved rural communities. By creating a more reliable process around replacement of these poor and critical condition structures, MaineDOT and municipalities will be able to better plan and actively improve the safety and increase travel time reliability for residents, workers, and businesses. SMPDC also supports MaineDOT's intention to apply for Bridge Program grants in subsequent years for bridge bundle projects identified through this planning program.

Replacement of the bridges can be done through establishing consistent criteria in coordination with communities, construction experts, and resource agencies with an eye towards efficiency, innovation, and habitat protection. Many of these bridge structures represent one of a limited number of access points for rural populations, and serve as the economic lifeblood of their respective regions. Every improvement to these poor and critical condition structures will help improve essential connections, and move goods, services, and people across safer and more resilient infrastructure.

SMPDC supports MaineDOT's initiative to create a planning process that evaluates off-system bridge replacements through careful consideration of local, regional, and statewide criteria. If successful, this grant funding will create a bridge bundling program that will immediately prioritize nearly a third of the 239 poor and critical condition bridges for replacement over the next four-year work plan, based on future bridge investment program funding opportunities. These replacements will use innovative technologies and processes while continuing to improve travel networks that are currently underserved.

This project enjoys strong local and regional support, and addresses a significant priority for the State of Maine. SMPDC hopes the USDOT will make a grant award to the MaineDOT to further strengthen the impact of decades of significant state and local investments in this important initiative.

Sincerely,

Paul Schumacher, Executive Director
Southern Maine Planning and Development Commission (SMPDC)