

Town of Manchester, Maine



September 8, 2022

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

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

Please accept this letter of strong support for the Maine Department of Transportation's (MaineDOT) grant application *U.S. Route 202/Interstate 95 Interchange Bridge Replacement and Pedestrian Safety Improvements Project* ("Project"), requesting U.S. Department of Transportation 2022 Bridge Investment Program (BIP) funding. The application outlines MaineDOT's important plans to replace the Western Avenue Overpass in Augusta that conveys U.S. 202/State Route 17 over Interstate 95. The 67-year-old, 6-lane span carries more than 28,000 vehicles daily over more than 34,000 vehicles daily traveling the interstate below.

The bridge is approaching the end of its useful life and was rated fair/poor condition during the last inspection and will likely be rated in poor condition during the 2023 inspection. Additionally, there is insufficient vertical clearance for safe freight passage on I-95, which makes it vulnerable to being struck which could significantly disrupt traffic at this busy crossing. Furthermore, there are narrow shoulders and functionally-obsolete sidewalks that exist on the current bridge.

The project would include a new bridge with a higher clearance and a number of improvements to the interstate ramps and the adjacent intersection with Whitten Road. The project will also incorporate wider sidewalks and modern, FHWA-compliant crosswalks so vulnerable roadway users can move safely through the project area and will be connected to the adjacent existing sidewalk system.

The Project is a MaineDOT priority consistent with BIP goals to: reduce the number of bridges in fair/poor condition that will fall into poor condition in the next three years, decrease the number of bridges that do not meet current geometric design standards and restore a bridge to a state of good repair within its existing right-of-way.

We are pleased that MaineDOT is seeking assistance from USDOT to help fund this critical regional Project and we respectfully request that you fully fund this Project under the BIP discretionary grant program. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Debora Southiere". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Debora Southiere
Manchester Town Manager