

September 21, 2023

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

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

The Greater Portland Council of Governments (GPCOG) and the Portland Area Comprehensive Transportation System (PACTS) – the MPO for the Portland, ME region – are pleased to support the Maine Department of Transportation’s grant application under the 2023 U.S. Department of Transportation Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods Program. The application, “Reconnecting Our Villages: Historic Libbytown (“the Project”), highlights how safety and infrastructure investments are needed to significantly improve access to opportunity for those living in the Libbytown neighborhood, a community which became disconnected from the rest of Portland, Maine because of the construction of Interstate 295 in the 1960s. The proposed work and requested funding will advance a regional priority project, improving connections throughout the community by:

- Reconstructing numerous streets to include traffic calming features and ADA-compliant sidewalks and crosswalks;
- Installing multi-use pathways to encourage active transportation along right-of-ways that are safe and modern;
- Enhancing transit stops to support stronger community-wide accessibility;
- Constructing a roundabout that is safe and improves traffic flow for drivers, bicyclists and pedestrians.
- Improving the resiliency of the transportation system by making transportation and stormwater investments in flood-prone areas; and
- Improving emergency response reliability by providing two-way traffic flow to Maine Medical Center, the state’s only level 1 trauma center.

The Project will expand opportunities for those who need it most by dramatically improving access to housing, employment, retail, healthcare, tourism and recreation. The Project is identified in PACTS’ long-range transportation plan (“[Connect 2045](#)”) and was prioritized as a top transportation priority for the region. The Project also aligns with the region’s [Vision Zero](#)

[Action Plan](#), which highlighted Congress Street and Park Avenue in Libbytown as critical safety corridors.

We applaud the strong partnership displayed by MaineDOT and City of Portland in seeking assistance from USDOT for this very important Project and hope USDOT is able to provide critical funding for our community. We recognize the importance of supporting USDOT merit criteria and providing equitable transportation options. Modernizing neighborhood transportation leads to safe and efficient connections and a better quality of life for all.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris Chop". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "C" and "H".

Christopher W. Chop
Transportation Director, Greater Portland Council of Governments