

SOUTHEASTERN WISCONSIN REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

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October 10, 2022

Ms. Faith Hall
Grant Lead, Reconnecting Communities Pilot Program
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, S.E.
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Ms. Hall:

On behalf of the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SEWRPC), I am writing in support of the Wisconsin Department of Transportation's (WisDOT) application for Reconnecting Communities Pilot (RCP) Program funding for the proposed Reconnecting Milwaukee – Reimagining WIS 175 Feasibility Study. This study will evaluate options for reconnecting communities that are currently impacted by the segment of STH 175 between W. Wisconsin Avenue and W. Lisbon Avenue in the City of Milwaukee.

STH 175 between W. Wisconsin Avenue and W. Lisbon Avenue is an approximately 1.5-mile segment of freeway that originally was intended to be part of a larger system of freeways in the Milwaukee urbanized area. This larger system of freeways was never completed, resulting in the current STH 175 “stub” freeway segment that does not function as originally intended. The STH 175 freeway segment currently experiences safety and operational issues, as exhibited by high crash rates, and it does not support transit, bicycle, or pedestrian modes of travel. Finally, the STH 175 freeway segment negatively affects the 19 surrounding neighborhoods and the nearly 51,000 residents that live within one mile of the freeway segment—the freeway inhibits multimodal travel and economic development for these residents.

The proposed study, jointly sponsored by WisDOT, Milwaukee County, and the City of Milwaukee, will examine options for transforming the STH 175 freeway segment into a new transportation corridor that would improve safety, support transit, bicycle, and pedestrian modes of transportation, and that would reconnect the neighborhoods on either side of the corridor and spur economic development and new housing. More specifically, the study will focus on the core areas of safety, economic strength, equity, and climate and sustainability. The study will conduct community-supported planning activities and will seek to support and engage economically disadvantaged and traditionally underserved communities. The study will also engage various advocacy groups and government agencies in the development and evaluation of innovative alternatives that consider the needs of all parties and modes of transportation and include land use development strategies that encourage economic development.

The proposed study is consistent with key recommendations of VISION 2050, Southeastern Wisconsin's long-range land use and transportation plan. More specifically, VISION 2050 recommends significantly improving and expanding public transit in the Region, implementing “transit-first” and “complete street” designs on urban streets, enhancing safety on streets and highways, expanding the on-street and off-street

Ms. Faith Hall
October 10, 2022
Page 2

bicycle network and implementing enhanced bicycle facilities in key corridors, and providing safe, efficient, and accessible pedestrian facilities. In addition, a number of the VISION 2050 land use recommendations would be assisted by a multimodal investment in this corridor, including recommendations to invest in already-developed areas to preserve primary environmental corridors and productive agricultural land, maximize the economic vitality of the Region, strengthen and grow mixed-use and mixed-income neighborhoods, and enable efficient provision of municipal services.

WisDOT's application for RCP funding represents a strong partnership between the Federal government and the State of Wisconsin, Milwaukee County, and the City of Milwaukee. We ask the U.S. Department of Transportation to carefully consider this project and the benefits it will provide to the City of Milwaukee, Milwaukee County, and Southeastern Wisconsin.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kevin J. Muhs". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Kevin J. Muhs, PE, AICP
Executive Director

KJM/CTH/ESJ/esj/cp
#265193 v2 – WisDOT 2022 Reconnecting Communities Pilot Program Grant Application – Letter of Support

cc: Mr. Craig Thompson, Secretary, Wisconsin Department of Transportation
Ms. Donna Brown-Martin, Director, Milwaukee County Department of Transportation
Mr. Jerrel Kruschke, Interim Commissioner of Public Works, City of Milwaukee