

**395 John Ireland Boulevard
St. Paul, Minnesota 55155**

May 19, 2022

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

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

The Minnesota Department of Transportation is pleased to submit the I-90 Austin Bridges Improvement and Mobility Project for the Multimodal Project Discretionary Grant solicitation under the INFRA award category. Interstate 90, built in the 1950s, is an important, national, east-west transportation network that connects vital economic centers across the United States. However, it also acts as a barrier to multimodal connectivity in the project corridor. This MnDOT project will replace or rehabilitate nine bridges along I-90 in the City of Austin, Minnesota, and improve roadway geometrics and remove the barrier in multimodal connectivity with the introduction of a network of Americans with Disabilities Act accessible multiuse sidewalks and trails.

The project provides multimodal connectivity to the thriving industrial community, housing development of various densities, employment centers, medical facilities and retail/commercial/tourist destinations. The corporate headquarters of Hormel Foods Corporation – a Fortune 500 company and the largest employer in Austin, the world-famous SPAM museum, and the Hormel Institute – a leading cancer research institution operated by the University of Minnesota and the Mayo Clinic, are all located within one mile of the project corridor. As one of the fastest growing regions in south central Minnesota, infrastructure improvements in Austin are critically needed so residents and visitors of all backgrounds, incomes and abilities may access jobs, healthcare and housing.

The existing bridges along the I-90 project corridor are at the end of their useful design life, which causes several operational and safety issues for the roadway users, freight haulers and businesses along the corridor. These issues include structurally deficient and/or functionally obsolete bridges with poor deck condition and geometry, insufficient vertical clearances and significant scour conditions at under water piers, among others. There are also significant crash and congestion issues due to narrow bridges, insufficient sight lines and traffic queuing. The absence of ADA accessible, multiuse walkways across I-90 is a huge barrier to multimodal connectivity for the community. The project will address all the transportation challenges noted above and will result in a cohesive network of multimodal alternatives that support diverse community needs.

The rehabilitation/replacement of nine bridges, associated roadway improvements and construction of new multimodal connections along the project corridor will strengthen the multimodal transportation system in Austin and will contribute toward the economic growth in the region. MnDOT will provide \$25 million in state funds toward a successful MPDG application for this important project.

Thank you for your interest and support to improve Minnesota's transportation system.

Sincerely,



Nancy Daubenberger, P.E.
Interim Commissioner