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July 9, 2021

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

RE: Letter of Support for the 2021 RAISE Discretionary Grant: MidTown-Hough Connector Project (Cleveland, Ohio)

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

I am writing in support of the City of Cleveland's application for funding through the United States Department of Transportation's Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant program. If awarded, the funding would be used to realize the community's shared vision for transforming the East 66th Street corridor, a one mile essential but crumbling infrastructure link, into a safe and accessible multimodal connector. The MidTown-Hough Connector Project would strengthen the connection between the Hough and MidTown neighborhoods, improve access to anchor institutions, and enable a more than two million square foot development hub for sustainable, inclusive, and equitable economic development and job creation.

The Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency (NOACA) is the transportation and environmental planning agency that represents state, county, city, village, and township officials in Greater Cleveland. NOACA is the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the counties of Cuyahoga, Geauga, Lake, Lorain and Medina counties.

In 2010, NOACA approved funding for the League Park Neighborhood District Plan, sponsored by the City of Cleveland, through its Transportation for Livable Communities Initiative (TLCI) program. The study established a strategy for future investment in the Hough neighborhood, specifically the League Park District. The goal of the plan was to depict a future for the neighborhood that will direct public investment, private redevelopment and multi-modal transportation initiatives. The plan provided a framework to catalyze the revitalization of League Park, with the aim to bring unity, prosperity and identity to this important Cleveland neighborhood.

Since the completion of the plan in 2012, there have been significant undertakings within and beyond the immediate study area. In addition to investments made by the residents and community stakeholders, several recent catalytic announcements for projects along the East 66th Street corridor were beyond the scope of the original TLCI plan. In 2019, the Cleveland Foundation expressed interest in partnering and provided a \$150,000 grant to NOACA to update the TLCI plan specific to content and expanded geography. The goal of the updated plan is to guide current and planned future investments along the entire East 66th Street corridor.

Recognizing the inherent racism built into the infrastructure of America's cities, a community-led prototype for neighborhood street design was initiated to ensure the voices of those most impacted by these inequities had a seat at the table to reimagine and improve the East 66th corridor. A range of best practices were considered and then balanced with the community's priorities to enhance the

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safety, equity, walkability, environmental and economic health of the area. The project is being advanced as the first pilot for implementation under NOACA's Complete and Green Streets policy adopted in 2020.

With RAISE grant funds, the MidTown-Hough Connector Project will improve the corridor by implementing the recommendations of neighborhood residents and youth. East 66th is one of the first streets to develop north to south and its improvement would catalyze neighborhood development across the city. The goal is to create significant local and regional impact with a new standard typology for neighborhood street design that employs advances in technology, construction of materials, and maintenance practices, improves safety and accessibility, and addresses community history and heritage through a resident-driven and community-responsive process.

In line with the new Administration's focus on equity in federal infrastructure investments, the project will improve access for underrepresented and underserved communities and provide better connections to key destinations and employment opportunities. The scope of this project will catalyze long-term, multigenerational social and economic development to enhance underserved neighborhoods, and transform the lives of people who deserve and need it so desperately. As such, the project directly advances NOACA's goals to build a sustainable, multimodal transportation system that supports economic development and enhance quality of life for the region's residents and visitors.

For these reasons, NOACA supports the City of Cleveland's MidTown-Hough Connector Project. Contingent upon the obligation of RAISE grant funding to the project, NOACA will amend the planning grants to its Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) to allow for expeditious implementation.

Respectfully,



Grace Gallucci,
Executive Director and CEO

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