

July 18, 2022

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

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

On behalf of the Maine Department of Transportation (Maine DOT), I am writing in support of the Bridge Investment Program Planning Grant Application requesting federal funding for the development of the Maine DOT Off-System Bridge Investment Program.

With your assistance, Maine DOT will be able to develop this program to replace off-system local bridges. Highlights of the program include standard designs, innovative materials, and construction techniques, and investing in critical connections to underserved rural communities. By creating a more reliable process around replacement of these poor and critical condition structures, both Maine DOT and municipalities will be able to better plan and actively improve the safety and increase travel time reliability for residents, workers and businesses that will benefit greatly from this bridge replacement program. It is Maine DOT's intention to apply for Bridge Program grants in subsequent years for bridge bundle projects identified through this planning program.

Replacement of the bridges can be done through establishing consistent criteria that can be developed in coordination with communities, construction experts, and resource agencies with an eye towards efficiency, innovation, and habitat protection. Most of these bridge structures represent one of a limited number of ways to access rural populations as they serve as the economic lifeblood of their respective regions. Every improvement to these poor and critical condition structures will have a significant benefit for maintaining essential connections, moving goods, services, and people across safer and more resilient infrastructure.

We The Maine State Chamber of Commerce support Maine DOT's initiative in creating a planning process that evaluates off-system bridge replacements through careful consideration of local, regional, and statewide criteria. If successful, this grant funding will create a bridge bundling program that will immediately prioritize nearly a third of the 239 poor and critical condition bridges for replacement over the next four-year work plan, based on future bridge investment program funding opportunities. These replacements will use innovative technologies and processes while continuing to improve travel networks that are currently underserved.

This Project enjoys strong local and regional support, and your help in making it possible will strengthen what Maine DOT has identified as a priority and significant need. The Maine State Chamber of Commerce hopes the USDOT will make a grant award to the Maine DOT to further strengthen the impact of decades of significant state and local investments in this important initiative.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dana F. Connors", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Dana F. Connors
President/CEO

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