



February 22, 2023

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

**Re: RAISE Grant Application
City of Kent, Ohio
*Reimagining the Gateway East Main Corridor Project***

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

The City of Kent, Ohio in partnership with Kent State University and the Portage Area Regional Transit Authority (PARTA), is applying for a RAISE grant for its *Reimagining the Gateway East Main Corridor Project*. This project will make significant multi-modal improvements to a nearly one-mile, car-centric section of East Main St. that includes the university, entrances to nearby neighborhoods and many commercial destinations.

Kent, Ohio is Portage County's largest city, with 61 percent of its residents in the low-and moderate-income range. Kent State is northern Ohio's largest public university with more than 25,000 students and employees on its campus. Traffic from the community, the university, and visitors has resulted in a congested five-lane, car-centric road, which conflicts with the numerous buses, bikes, and pedestrians that also utilize this critical piece of surface infrastructure. **The majority of this corridor has been listed as the worst crash corridor in the local Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) region since 2014.**

While some short-term measures have been taken to address congestion and safety issues, **this multi-year project will provide a long-term solution that focuses on multimodal transportation safety and access for our city's diverse population.** When completed, *Reimagining the Gateway* will significantly improve traffic flow for motorists and transit, while reducing speeds and making crossings safer for pedestrians and cyclists. It will also provide reasonable access and enhanced entrances to adjacent properties and neighborhoods.

Project features include a tree-lined center boulevard, wider sidewalks with a tree lawn buffer, enhanced and more visible crosswalks, shared use paths for bikes and pedestrians, two roundabouts, enhanced lighting, and new bus pull-offs and shelters. These improvements will also provide easier access to PARTA's Central Gateway transit hub in downtown Kent, which will better serve the city's lower income population that often relies on transit as their means of transportation. These enhancements integrate well with the university's Gateway Master Plan, which also includes a cost sharing agreement between the city and Kent State for this infrastructure project.

Reimagining the Gateway aligns with many key components of the RAISE grant program. A collaboration of local, regional and state entities (including the Ohio Department of Transportation and the regional MPO), this project will improve safety in the area, enhance the quality of life for area neighborhoods, increase mobility and community connectivity for adjacent disadvantaged communities, and advance sustainability.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Todd Diacon", enclosed within a blue circular scribble.

Todd Diacon

Office of the President

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