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February 23, 2023

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg  
Secretary, U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE  
Washington, DC 20590-9898

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

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

The Portage County Engineer is pleased to offer its full support of the City of Kent's Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant application. The City of Kent, in partnership with Portage Area Regional Transit Authority (PARTA), and Kent State University (KSU) 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 KSU, entrances to nearby neighborhoods and many food/retail destinations.

Kent is Portage County's largest city, with 61 percent of its residents in the low-and moderate-income range. KSU is one of Ohio's leading public universities with more than 25,000 students on its main campus. Traffic from the community, the university, and visitors has resulted in a five-lane car-centric road congested with motorists, which conflicts with the numerous busses, bikes, and pedestrians. The majority of this corridor has been listed as the worst crash corridor in the local MPO region since 2014.

While some short-term measures have been taken to address the congestion, this multi-year project will provide a long-term solution that focuses on multimodal transportation safety and access to a 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 also integrate well with KSU's Gateway Master Plan.

*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.

Your support and consideration for this vital Portage County project is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michael A. Marozzi". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial "M".

Michael A. Marozzi, P.E., P.S.  
Portage County Engineer