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August 11, 2023

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

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

Please accept this letter in support of the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) application for USDOT's FY2023 Multimodal Project Discretionary Grant (MPDG) assistance to fund and actualize the I-90 Allston Multimodal Project located in the City of Boston.

We represent a diverse group of civic organizations, representatives of local institutions and businesses, economic development groups, environmental and open-space organizations, and active transportation and transit advocates. Over the last 9 years we have been engaged in the planning of the I-90 Allston Multimodal Project as members of the project Task Force. In addition to this formal role, many of us are neighborhood residents and stakeholders.

The I-90 Allston Multimodal Project creates an opportunity to dramatically improve livability and connectivity for residents of Boston's Allston neighborhood, an environmental justice population defined by both Federal and Massachusetts laws, while enhancing regional mobility and creating

a significant new multimodal passenger train station for the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA).

In 1965, Massachusetts officials opened the Allston section of I-90, shoehorning an eight-lane elevated highway between Boston University and the Charles River, dividing a vibrant working-class community, shutting down important passenger rail stations, and wounding important riverfront habitat in the process. The highway was designed and built prior to the protections now provided by the National Environmental Policy Act and Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act, and financed without a dollar of federal funding through bonds secured by tolls. Some 60 years later, Boston still endures harmful impacts from this obsolete, failed transportation policy that placed a highway above the needs of neighborhoods and the environment.

The Allston Viaduct is nearing the end of its useful lifespan. For almost a decade, MassDOT has been developing a concept to replace the Allston Interchange and Viaduct. The MassDOT team worked with a Task Force composed of residents, advocates, elected and appointed officials, representatives of local institutions and businesses, and the Allston community at-large—many of whom have signed onto this support letter.

In September 2021, MassDOT identified the Modified At-Grade Option as the focus for the Allston I-90 Multimodal Project. In December 2022, MassDOT selected the Modified At-Grade design—the clear consensus option—as its preferred alternative. We are committed to continuing our work with MassDOT to see the project to completion—building a future where the needs of public transit riders, cyclists, pedestrians, and the health of the river are as important as motorists traveling on this section of interstate. The I-90 Task Force has confidence in MassDOT’s ability to combine prospective awards with a realistic funding plan to execute the Allston I-90 Multimodal Project. We believe federal funds are critical to the success of the project.

The I-90 Allston Multimodal Project fulfills each of the USDOT’s six selection criteria in terms of project outcomes:

1. Safety: *Addresses known safety problems and helps to protect both motorized and non-motorized users.* The Modified At-Grade Option addresses known safety problems and protects motorized users by providing the safest horizontal alignment and vertical profile for the

replacement of the functionally deficient existing I-90 viaduct by reducing curves and steep grades, which will reduce excessive speeds and crash rates. By removing reverse curves and providing wider and separated multi-use pathways, it also enhances the safety of non-motorized users by increasing pedestrian and bicycle connectivity.

2. State of Good Repair: *Addresses current and projected vulnerabilities that, if left unimproved, threaten future transportation network efficiency, mobility of goods or accessibility and mobility of people, or economic growth.* The Modified At-Grade Option would replace the existing, deteriorating I-90 viaduct with a new at-grade highway, and on a life-cycle cost basis will result in lower maintenance costs and reduced vulnerability to deterioration in the future.
3. Economic Impacts, Freight Movement, and Job Creation: *Improves system operations, improves multimodal transportation systems that incorporate affordable transportation options such as public transit to improve mobility of people and goods, results in high quality job creation by supporting good-paying jobs, and fosters economic development.* The new highway interchange will free up some 75 acres for new ground and air-rights development in one of the largest remaining underdeveloped areas of Boston.
4. Climate Change, Resiliency, and the Environment: *Reduces air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions from transportation and results in a modal shift that reduces emissions.* The Modified At-Grade Option will reduce congestion associated with the highway interchange, create a new major multimodal transit station, and enhance pedestrian and bicycle connectivity. It also allows for a living shoreline, or other nature-based solutions, to increase climate resiliency, improve habitat for living resources, and enhance active and passive recreation.
5. Equity, Multimodal Options, and Quality of Life: *Increases affordable and accessible transportation choices* by providing a new major multimodal transit station, enhanced pedestrian and bicycle access to the Charles River basin, new environmental enhancements and noise reduction strategies alongside the Allston and Cambridge sides of the river. The project would reunite two parts of an environmental justice population that has been divided for more than two generations by the original, elevated Turnpike.

6. Innovation: *Adopts innovative practices in project delivery and financing* by providing for design-build procurement and innovative approaches to highway and transit financing, as well as an ongoing task force of over 50 stakeholders to continue its important advisory role.

As residents, business, environmental, institutional, and transportation advocates, we remain deeply invested to help support and see this project through to a successful completion. We know the support of the USDOT's FY2023 Multimodal Project Discretionary Grant is needed to help move this project forward.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Bowie, President, Cambridgeport Neighborhood Association

Kate Dineen, President & CEO, A Better City

Anthony D'Isidoro, President, Allston Civic Association

Seth Gadbois, Clean Transportation Staff Attorney, Conservation Law Foundation

Laura Jasinski, Executive Director, Charles River Conservancy

Jarred Johnson, Executive Director, TransitMatters

Brendan Kearney, co-Executive Director, WalkMassachusetts

Wendy Landman, Cambridgeport resident

Anna Leslie, Director, Allston Brighton Health Collaborative

Harry Mattison, Allston Community Representative, I-90 Task Force

Vick Mohanka, Acting Chapter Director, Massachusetts Sierra Club

Galen Mook, Executive Director, MassBike

Timothy Murray, President & CEO of Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce

Beth O'Neill Maloney, Executive Director, Kendall Square Association

Jessica Robertson, Allston Community Representative, I-90 Task Force

Stacy Thompson, Executive Director, LivableStreets Alliance

Pete Wilson, Senior Policy Advisor, Transportation for Massachusetts

Jack Wofford, Cambridgeport resident

Fred Yalouris, Cambridge Community Representative, I-90 Task Force

Carl Zimba, President, Charles River Alliance of Boaters

Cathie Zusy, President, Magazine Beach Partners

CC:

The Honorable Maura T. Healey, Governor, Commonwealth of Massachusetts

The Honorable Kimberley L. Driscoll, Lt. Governor, Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Gina Fiandaca, Secretary and CEO, MassDOT

Jonathan Gulliver, Highway Administrator, MassDOT

Quentin Palfrey, Director of Federal Funds and Infrastructure, Commonwealth of Massachusetts

The Honorable Michelle Wu, Mayor, City of Boston

Jascha Franklin-Hodge, Chief of Streets, Transportation, and Sanitation, City of Boston

Christopher Coes, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Transportation Policy, USDOT

Paul Baumer, Program Manager, Office of Infrastructure Finance and Innovation, USDOT