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JOINT ECONOMIC COMMITTEE

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-1604

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

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

We write in support of the grant application submitted by the City of Wichita, Kansas for the Reconnecting Communities Pilot Discretionary Grant Program (RCP) for the 21st Street Corridor project.

The City of Wichita, along with its partners, is requesting a \$1,000,000 planning grant, matched by \$250,000 from the partnership, to conduct public engagement and a planning study on how to reconnect a vital portion of the city that is divided by railroads and an interstate along 21st Street. Partners include Sedgewick County, the Kansas Department of Transportation, railroad operators, and local community organizations.

Currently, the 21st Street Corridor runs between two distinct and culturally rich communities in the city. The one-mile corridor bisecting the communities includes multiple sets of railroad tracks and rail yards, an interstate highway (I-135), and an industrial commercial area. While the interstate highway and the industrial uses are barriers between the two neighborhoods, the trains pose the most significant physical impediment to movement between the two communities. The two communities are adjacent to 21st Street, a primary throughfare connecting east and west Wichita. In the project area, 21st Street is crossed by eight rail tracks grouped into four crossings.

According to data from the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), these tracks have an estimated 75 train movements per day, mostly at low speeds, for unknown amounts of time, as they cross 21st Street. It is common for 21st Street traffic to wait five to nine minutes for a train to pass. Traffic could be stopped for upwards of 90 minutes at a crossing while switching is taking place in the rail yards to access spur tracks.

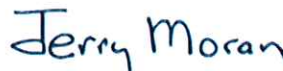
As a result, many Wichitans and business interests choose to avoid the area, limiting economic development and posing challenges to accessing medical facilities, jobs, childcare, places of worship, grocery stores, and more. As it stands, there are 261 vacant parcels – 85 of which are commercial and/or industrial lots between the railroad tracks and I-135. Furthermore, the industrial nature of the area brings noise, unsafe environments for pedestrians/bike riders, a lack of transit access, and increased wait times for emergency services.

The next evolution of our community is on the horizon, and Wichita hopes to begin assessing and addressing the unique challenges of the 21st Street Corridor project. We appreciate your attention to this matter and request all due consideration be given to the City of Wichita's application.

Sincerely,



Ron Estes
U.S. House of Representatives



Jerry Moran
United States Senate



Roger Marshall
United States Senate