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Friday, February 16, 2024

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
U.S. Secretary of Transportation
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, D.C. 20590

RE: Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) Grant opportunity for the **Hochatown Community Access and Pedestrian Safety Project**.

Honorable Secretary Buttigieg:

On behalf of Bike Oklahoma, I am writing to voice our organization's strong support of the Oklahoma Department of Transportation's (ODOT) application for the RAISE Grant for Hochatown Community Access and Pedestrian Safety Project. This critical project will upgrade a six-mile section of US-259 in the newly formed City of Hochatown in rural, southeast Oklahoma. The Hochatown region is home to multiple industries, including agriculture and logging, which contribute to the traffic on US-259 through Hochatown. Significantly, the region is adjacent to Broken Bow Lake and Beavers Bend State Park. Recreational visitors from across Oklahoma, Texas, and Arkansas stream into the community to take advantage of the area's scenic recreational opportunities, notably biking and hiking trails.

The region has boomed over the past 5 years; and with so much growth and economic development, traffic congestion and safety challenges have increased. Bike Oklahoma appreciates how the traffic congestion yields slow and safe speeds which minimize severe crashes. However, it's unsafe for pedestrians and bicyclists in the area to navigate. The current two-lane roadway lacks shoulders or turn lanes, sidewalks or crossing infrastructure. This puts pedestrians, bicyclists and drivers in unsafe situations just to use and cross the corridor.

The Hochatown Community Access and Pedestrian Safety Project seeks to alleviate these challenges by expanding the roadway capacity, along with improved access management. ODOT will achieve ADA access by providing sidewalks. Capacity for cars to achieve higher throughput doesn't excite us. But critically, the RAISE grant would elevate sidewalk projects to multi-use trails; and additional safety improvements for intersections, speed management and safe crossings could be achieved.

Bike Oklahoma supports the Hochatown Community Access and Pedestrian Safety Project to provide safe and complete connectivity for pedestrians and bicyclists to access the region's trail system. We strongly urge your support of full funding for the project. Thank you for your consideration and please feel free to call on us should you have questions or if you require additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tony Carfang".

Tony Carfang
President, Bike Oklahoma