

August 19, 2020

Dear members of Congress,

On behalf of a nationwide coalition of campaigns seeking to reimagine freeway corridors in American cities, we, the undersigned 96 organizations, call on our leaders in Congress to support the proposed Reconnecting Communities program included in the current Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act; expand funding for the program; and to create additional guidelines, outlined below, to facilitate community participation within the program and to prevent displacement caused by program-related projects.

We are thrilled that with the Reconnecting Communities program Congress has recognized and signaled interest in addressing the historic injustices that highways have caused, especially to communities of color. However, funding the program at 1/20th of its original proposed budget would greatly reduce this opportunity to reconnect and heal communities divided by interstate highways and other infrastructure. Many freeway capping and highway-to-boulevard projects have already entered into feasibility studies, a large number of which individually are estimated to cost more than the program's current \$1 billion budget. Without additional funding, the program will either fail to adequately fund even one full project from planning to implementation, or will grant many communities the opportunity to reimagine their neighborhoods without providing any follow-through in the form of dedicated capital construction funds.

We call for additional guidelines within the Reconnecting Communities program that ensure it puts the people living around highways first. State departments of transportation have lost the trust of many of the communities this program would assist, and for good reason. While state DOTs are important partners in these endeavors, they continue to build and expand the highways that have divided communities. Any bill that channels money exclusively to these agencies will not meaningfully change the status quo. Instead, we ask that the program fund community engagement and capacity building that local, community-based nonprofits and organizations are eligible to apply for. Organizations like these are already working with residents on a volunteer basis and have the power to build consensus around these projects to advance a community vision. All they need is funding.

When it comes to implementing Reconnecting Communities projects, we recognize the potential economic benefits infrastructure investment of this scale can generate. We hope to see strong guidelines that steer those economic benefits to the residents who have been harmed by the existence of the infrastructure barriers. This starts with requiring capital construction grantees to enact anti-displacement protections that will keep residents in place once a highway is removed or covered. Studies have shown projects that remove infrastructure barriers can also increase the potential for the displacement of long standing residents, who find themselves priced out of their communities. Without anti-displacement protections, the Reconnecting Communities program threatens to harm the communities it is meant to help. The Reconnecting Communities

program should also prioritize contracting design and construction businesses that are based in the project area, to further increase local economic benefits.

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act also comes with a historic investment in highway building. We hope that there will be guidelines in place on this spending to ensure maintenance is prioritized over expansion or building new roads that will further divide communities. Without proper guidance, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act will replicate the very problems that the Reconnecting Communities program seeks to address, undermining the concepts of equity, sustainability, and community described by the Secretary of Transportation and backed by the White House.

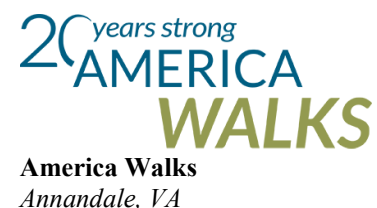
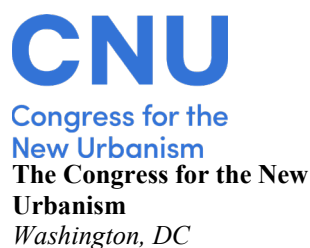
With these priorities in mind, we hope to see an expanded Reconnecting Communities program in the final Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, one that increases funding and roots the program in community priorities. The existing Reconnecting Communities Act in the Senate (S.1202) and Restoring Neighborhoods and Strengthening Communities Act in the House (H.R. 2859) provide examples of a framework that we would gladly support. We urge you to enact the policies contained within these two pieces of legislation, either by passing them individually or by incorporating them in the Reconnecting Communities program of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.

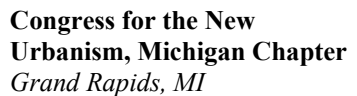
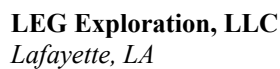
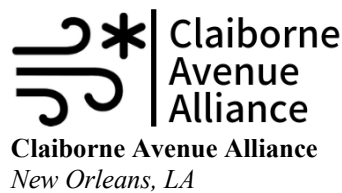
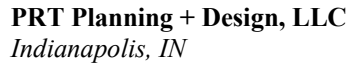
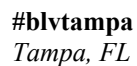
Thank you for your leadership.

Respectfully,



Ben Crowther
Program Manager
The Highways to Boulevards Initiative
Congress for the New Urbanism







Duluth Waterfront Collective
Duluth, MN

our streets MPLS

Our Streets Minneapolis
Minneapolis, MN

Sweetwater Alliance
Duluth, MN



We Walk in Duluth
Duluth, MN



Zeitgeist Center for Arts & Community
Duluth, MN



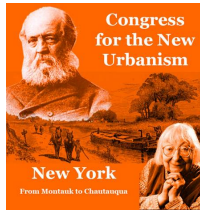
Downtown Council of Kansas City
Kansas City, MO



Albany Riverfront Collaborative
Albany, NY



Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy
Buffalo, NY



Congress for the New Urbanism, New York State Chapter
New York, NY



GreeningUSA
Liverpool, NY



Hinge Neighbors, Inc.
Rochester, NY



RESTORE OUR COMMUNITY COALITION
Restore Our Community Coalition
Buffalo, NY



The Future of Small Cities Institute
Troy, NY



The Scajaquada Corridor Coalition
Buffalo, NY

Civic By Design
Charlotte, NC

Durham Freeways to Boulevards Justice Project
Durham, NC



Montford Neighborhood Association
Asheville, NC



Placemaking Studio
Raleigh, NC



Urban3
Asheville, NC

Bridge Forward Cincinnati
Cincinnati, OH

Transform Tulsa Alliance
Tulsa, OK



Business for a Better Portland
Portland, OR



No More Freeways
Portland, OR



Parking Reform Network
Portland, OR



Place Initiative
Portland, OR



Ride Report
Portland, OR



Catholic Social Action
Pittsburgh, PA



Civitas.design
Erie, PA



Connect Urban Erie
Erie, PA



Map Labs
Charleston, SC



Air Alliance Houston
Houston, TX



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CTX
Congress for the New Urbanism, Central Texas Chapter
Austin, TX



Farm&City
Austin, TX



Fix 290
Austin, TX

Freeways for the People
El Paso, TX



Mueller Neighborhood Association
Austin, TX



LINK Houston
Houston, TX



Oak Hill Neighbors
Austin, TX



Reconnect Austin
Austin, TX



Rethink35
Austin, TX

Ridgeview Homeowners Association
Austin, TX



Save Barton Creek Association
Austin, TX



Save Oak Hill
Austin, TX



Save Our Springs Alliance
Austin, TX



Sierra Club Lone Star Chapter
Austin, TX

South Windmill Run Neighborhood Association
Austin, TX



Stop TxDOT I-45
Houston, TX



Velo Paso Bicycle-Pedestrian Coalition
El Paso, TX



Walk Austin
Austin, TX



Bridgewright Partners
Seattle, WA



Cultivate South Park
Seattle, WA



Disability Mobility Initiative
Washington State



Lid I-5
Seattle, WA



Move Redmond
Redmond, WA

SEATTLE PARKS FOUNDATION
Seattle Parks Foundation
Seattle, WA



Transportation Choices Coalition
Seattle, WA



1000 Friends of Wisconsin
Madison, WI



La Crosse Area Transit Advocates
La Crosse, WI

LAW OFFICE OF DENNIS M. GRZEZINSKI
Environmental Law and Civil Litigation

Law Office of Dennis M. Grzezinski
Milwaukee, WI



MILWAUKEE RIVERKEEPER
Milwaukee Riverkeeper
Milwaukee, WI

Milwaukee Transit Riders Union
Milwaukee, WI



Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice
Madison, WI



**Wisconsin Transit Riders
Alliance**
Madison, WI