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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 27, 2023

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

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

I write today in support of the application from the Borough of Susquehanna Depot to the Department of Transportation's "Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods" program for its Ira Reynolds Riverfront Park project. I urge you to give this application full and fair consideration.

Once home to an engine-building facility for the Erie Railroad, the small Borough of Susquehanna Depot has struggled economically as it navigated deindustrialization. Borough leaders have told me that after the factory in the 1960s, the rail line that had served as a vital economic connector turned into a barrier cutting off the borough from the Susquehanna River. Additionally, I have been told that the site of the former factory sat for years as a brownfield polluted with arsenic, copper, and lead.

I understand that in the past decade, Commonwealth and borough leaders have worked together to revitalize the former factory site into a new greenspace, the 14.77-acre Ira Reynolds Park. Susquehanna Depot officials have shared with me that this was the first "Brownfields to Greenfields" demonstration project sponsored by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and has become a real point of pride for the community.

However, Borough leaders have stressed that the rail line still serves as a barrier that prevents residents and visitors from being able to take full advantage of the park. The only way to access the park from downtown Susquehanna Depot requires moving under a narrow railroad overpass, passing an uncovered sewage treatment plant, and then going past a water-tanker filling facility used for gas drilling. I understand that this route is difficult by car and dangerous on foot, deterring people from using this amenity.

To address this, I am told that the borough is seeking approximately \$150,000 from the Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods program to develop plans for how best to fully connect the Ira Reynolds Park with the rest of Susquehanna Depot. Borough officials have informed me that they hope this planning money will lay the groundwork for future, capital awards that will complete the project.

Thank you in advance for your thoughtful consideration. Please include this letter in the official record of the application. Consistent with all applicable laws, rules, and regulations, I also respectfully request that you keep me informed of the status of this grant application. Finally, if you have any questions, comments, or concerns, please feel free to contact me or my staff at (202) 224-6324.

Sincerely,



Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator