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January 24, 2024

Honorable Pete Buttigieg, Secretary
United States Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

RE: FY2023 and FY2024 Bridge Investment Program (BIP) Grant Application from Mercer County, New Jersey

Dear Mr. Buttigieg,

I am writing to support the application from the County of Mercer, New Jersey, to the USDOT FY2023 and FY2024 BRIDGE INVESTMENT PROGRAM (BIP) GRANT program. Mercer County is requesting gap funding for the replacement of the Lincoln Avenue Bridge. Other available federal and state funds fall more than \$20 million short of the estimated construction cost. In design now with federal funds and pursuing a federal process, Mercer County must otherwise burden county taxpayers with a general revenue bond to pay for construction as scheduled in 2025-2026.

When this project graduated to the Design phase, the County's metropolitan planning organization, the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission, expected to program construction with federal funds flexibly deployed across its four counties in New Jersey. However, in 2018, the Federal Highway Administration required that formula funds allocated to a Census-designated urbanized area be spent within that area. The Surface Transportation Block Grant Program for the Trenton Urbanized Area (STPBGP_Trenton) amounts to just over \$5 million annually. The City of Trenton is a State-designated Urban Aid Municipality and has recently been certified as eligible to manage federal aid transportation projects. The City has other priority projects to federalize and has requested Mercer County to find other means to pay for Lincoln Avenue and for the State to pay for the three orphan bridges just to the south on the Northeast Corridor, which the State has maintained.

The Lincoln Avenue Bridge was built in 1931 and is the longest bridge in Mercer County's inventory. It is designated as structurally deficient and functionally obsolete. There is a large thru hole in the deck which is covered by a steel plate and the concrete is spalling off the superstructure

over the tracks of Amtrak's Northeast Corridor Line and the bridge carries the rail line's electrical catenary, gas mains, and electrical and communication conduits. It also spans Assunpink Creek and an abandoned rail yard that the City wishes to convert to an urban park. It is the direct walking path from subsidized housing maintained by the Trenton Housing Authority to Trenton Central High School. This is an underfunded, regionally significant project that is of considerable importance to a distressed urban community.

Please consider authorizing a Bridge Investment Program (BIP) Grant to Mercer County for this project. I appreciate your consideration for this proposal and would be happy to provide further information on why it is a good use of taxpayers' money.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bonnie Watson Coleman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Bonnie" being the most prominent.

BONNIE WATSON COLEMAN
Member of Congress