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September 16, 2024

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

Subject: **Reconnecting East Greensboro and Reconnecting Communities Pilot Program**

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

On behalf of myself and the community I was born in, I enthusiastically support the City of Greensboro's application for a planning grant under the U.S. Department of Transportation's Reconnecting Communities Pilot (RCP) Program. I understand this proposal has been prepared in partnership with the N.C. Department of Transportation and Greensboro Metropolitan Planning Organization.

I understand the Plan will study the neighborhoods around seven miles of US Highway 29 between I-40 and I-785 in East Greensboro, a 75-year-old, access-controlled highway bisecting a historically Black community. Its construction destroyed important community assets, and this physical barrier continues to limit mobility and community connectivity. The neighborhoods impacted by the construction of US 29 have a generational legacy of poverty and disconnect stemming from the barrier created by this multi-lane highway.

The incursion of US 29 into the segregated, oppressed, but resilient and proud African-American community of Greensboro, NC, caused additional disruption to an area that was already being (or would be) impacted by redlining, urban renewal, civil rights, educational, and other challenges. US 29 bisected our community and negatively impacted east Greensboro by:

- Cutting neighborhoods off from each other.
- Restricting a main access route to downtown Greensboro on Gorrell Street was taken away for many, further changed with the addition of Murrow Blvd.
- Blocking North Carolina Agricultural & Technical State University from eastward expansion.
- Restricted access to Nocho Park became challenged by both Gate City Blvd. and US 29.
- Lincoln Junior High School and Dudley High School became isolated to westward communities.

And so much more but let me stop with this. At a time when walking was the main mode of transportation, walks became longer. Development over the years has not eased these woes, but in many ways made them worse. This can easily be seen during a drive on US 29 with an observant glance to the left and right. It will reveal the impact. Much needs to be done to mitigate these wrongs!

An inclusive, community-driven planning process will define issues, identify solutions, and create integrated solutions tailored to our community. Local stakeholders will be engaged in each step, and we believe this focused community involvement will help rebuild community trust and provide valuable insight into the lived experience of residents. A shared vision for the community will meaningfully address the historical inequities created by US 29 and inform future transportation improvements within the corridor.

East Greensboro residents have a prominent history of fighting, and in some cases dying, for equal rights when students from schools in this corridor led one of the first non-violent sit-in protests in the U.S. Our Plan will build on this legacy by creating a multimodal blueprint to retrofit this critical corridor, mitigate past harm, and serve the community it has marginalized.

I hope you will favorably consider this funding request.

Sincerely,

B. Bernetaie Reed

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Oral Historian

Conversations in Black: African American History and Heritage, Greensboro, N.C.

An overlay of 1951 aerial view of Greensboro

