



**U.S. Department
of Transportation**

Office of the Secretary
of Transportation

Under Secretary for Policy

1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

December 27, 2023

Mr. Thomas Evans
Executive Director
Cambridge Redevelopment Authority (CRA)
255 Main Street 8th Floor
Cambridge, MA 02142

Dear Mr. Evans:

Thank you for your letter supporting the Bicycle Pedestrian Crossing of the Fitchburg Commuter Rail Line application for the Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods (RCN) Grant Program.

The deadline for submitting final applications was 11:59 pm Eastern on September 28, 2023, and we anticipate announcing awards in the near future. Please be assured all properly submitted applications will receive full and careful consideration.

Thank you for your support of this program and for your partnership as we work to strengthen our nation's infrastructure.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'C. Monje, Jr.', written in a cursive style.

Carlos A. Monje, Jr.



Pete Buttigieg
Secretary of Transportation
US Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

RE: Letter of support for Cambridge RCN grant application for Pedestrian and Bicycle Crossing of the MBTA Fitchburg Rail Line

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

The Cambridge Redevelopment Authority (CRA) fully supports the City of Cambridge grant application for planning and design of a pedestrian and bicycle crossing over the Fitchburg Commuter Rail Line. Their grant request for the amount of \$2,400,000 to design this crossing will reconnect the Rindge Avenue neighborhood with nearby natural open spaces, retail and grocery stores, and job opportunities. The CRA believes that the Rindge Avenue community deserves improved and safer connections, and a pedestrian and bicycle crossing would allow residents to move between places more easily, at all times of the day, and for people of all ages and mobilities.

This past year, the CRA, in collaboration with the City of Cambridge has been working with the Rindge residents of 402, 364 and 362 Rindge Avenue, to understand their local connectivity priorities. The 402, 364 and 362 buildings are 100% below market rate rental units, housing approximately 2,000 residents, the majority of whom speak English as a second language. This summer, with the help of resident Engagement Coordinators, the CRA completed a survey, translated into 9 languages, asking residents where they often travel to in the area. We received 304 responses to our survey, roughly 15% of the total resident population. The top two destination results showed that 84% of residents traveled to Fresh Pond Shopping Center, and 72% of residents traveled to Cambridge's largest open space with recreation fields, Danehy Park. Both destinations are located on the other side of the Fitchburg Rail corridor, **proving strong resident interest and demand in the implementation of a pedestrian and bicycle crossing over the Fitchburg Commuter Rail Line.**

Additionally, the CRA is conducting feasibility studies to design path connections within the 402, 364 and 362 Rindge Avenue properties. See the path concepts in the Exhibit attached. When implemented, these paths would provide direct connection between a Fitchburg Rail Crossing to the Alewife MBTA Station, Rindge Avenue, Russell Field/DCR Pool, and on to the MinuteMan and Somerville Community Multi-Use paths. This network will not only provide better resident access to nearby resources, but it will also **fill a critical gap in the sustainable transportation network in North Cambridge and beyond, connecting regional multi-use paths enabling access to Belmont, Somerville, Watertown, Arlington, and Lexington.**

Providing active transportation options to this area is of the utmost importance as we continue to seek opportunities to support environmental justice and equitable access to healthy transportation options. A crossing would help eliminate unsafe, at-grade crossings of the tracks through holes in perimeter fencing. It would also facilitate stormwater retention features and add needed tree canopy and landscaped areas for climate resilience. Finally, it would also provide a greater opportunity to include disadvantaged and environmental justice populations in the planning and design process of the proposed project.

The CRA would look forward to continuing our partnership with the City of Cambridge to help connect and transform the North Cambridge area to one that is rich in transportation options. As such, we strongly encourage you to fund the North Cambridge Pedestrian and Bicycle crossing of the MBTA Fitchburg Line planning and design.

Thank you for this important opportunity to strengthen the region's livability.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Thomas Evans', written in a cursive style.

Thomas Evans

Executive Director of the CRA