

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-4404

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

April 14, 2022

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

I am writing to express my support for the federal grant application submitted by Salt Lake City to the U.S. Department of Transportation seeking assistance through the Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) Discretionary Grant Program. The federal grant would support the **Solving the Puzzle of East-West Connections** (*the Study*), an alternatives analysis to evaluate how to most effectively address the barriers associated with multiple multi-modal crossings for the north-south rail and interstate corridor bisecting Salt Lake City and neighboring jurisdictions. The requested investment would be used to understand how to most effectively reconnect communities divided by infrastructure and mitigate physical and socioeconomic barriers in the capital city of Utah, which is a regional and national economic engine situated at the “Crossroads of the West.”

Over 150 years of growth and development on either side of this infrastructure divide have resulted in an entrenched east-west bisection of the city; the requested RAISE grant would empower local leaders to begin to address one of the most persistent transportation challenges for Salt Lake City and surrounding communities in the Wasatch Front region. The dominant north-south travel corridor for the movement of goods and people across Utah is bounded by the topography of the Wasatch Front mountain range. To date, this fact has resulted in north-south corridor surface transportation investments at the expense of an effective east-west transportation network.

Low-income and racially diverse neighborhoods in the Westside have been historically disenfranchised from the education and employment opportunities on the Eastside generated by downtown, the University of Utah, and Research Park. The physical barriers from I-15, I-80, and our freight and commuter rail lines isolate Eastside and Westside communities and result in socio-economic inequities and adverse environmental and public health impacts. Seven of the eight tracts meet the definition of a historically disadvantaged community according to the Department, while six tracts meet the definition of an area of persistent poverty.

Salt Lake City leaders understand the importance of an east-west surface transportation network that is safe for all users, including those walking, biking, or using transit. Salt Lake City will conduct the National Environmental Policy Act process for eight grade-separated crossings of freight and commuter rail lines running parallel to Interstate 15 (I-15). The city will evaluate infrastructure improvements designed to resolve conflicts at multiple east-west crossings. Some alternatives could make up to 150 acres of land downtown available for redevelopment.

Therefore, I respectfully urge your fair and full consideration for the RAISE planning grant submitted by Salt Lake City. Please contact my staff at [CONTACT] if you have any questions about the **Solving the Puzzle of East-West Connections** (*the Study*). Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'B. Owens', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Burgess Owens
Member of Congress