



Saturday, March 2, 2024

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

RE: Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) Grant opportunity for **Bridging the Gap: New Multimodal Connections over the Oklahoma River**

Honorable Secretary Buttigieg:

I am writing you on behalf of USRowing, the nonprofit membership organization recognized by the United States Olympic & Paralympic Committee as the national governing body for the sport of rowing.

Our organization strongly supports the Oklahoma Department of Transportation's (ODOT) RAISE Grant application for **Bridging the Gap: New Multimodal Connections over the Oklahoma River**. This Grant would support construction of a separate bicycle and pedestrian bridge adjacent to I-35 as a component of the marquis project to replace the I-35 bridge in Oklahoma City's downtown core.

You've often noted that "transportation should connect, never divide," and this RAISE Grant would further unite Oklahoma City, its residents, and its visitors through easier access to outdoor recreation across the metropolitan area. Along the edge of downtown runs the scenic Oklahoma River, a 7-mile-long waterway and 13 miles of paved trails that has reinvented outdoor recreation in the capital city. The new bridge would provide a safer independent facility for bicycle and pedestrian access to the amenities on both sides of the river, linking to 10 interconnected trails that cover over 80 miles and can take you to almost every point in Oklahoma City. This project includes connections to the new Horizons District – including the First Americans Museum and OKANA resort – with the historically disadvantaged Capitol Hill District.

Since the I-35 bridges were built over three decades ago, the Oklahoma River has been dammed and now hosts both grassroots and elite-level rowing races, including our inaugural USRowing RowFest National Championships this summer. Near the edge of the river is the new Riversport Complex, which is home to US Olympic Team training for multiple watersports and offers recreation and education opportunities for the community.

USRowing's vision is **to advance the legacy of rowing by extending its transformative rewards to all**, and an essential step towards that future is improving awareness and access to our sport for all Americans. This RAISE Grant will enable the Oklahoma River and Riversport Complex to host more compelling and welcoming championship-caliber rowing events, including the USRowing Youth National Championships

– 2023 winner of the SportsTravel Best Amateur Sports Event award. The separate bicycle and pedestrian bridge will provide the infrastructure needed not only for the over 10,000 athletes, coaches, and spectators from around the country who attend the regatta each year, but also for the broader Oklahoma City community to experience the sport more readily.

USRowing urges your support for full funding of **Bridging the Gap: New Multimodal Connections over the Oklahoma River**. Thank you for your consideration and do not hesitate to contact me should you have questions or require additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Cacioppo', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Rich Cacioppo
Executive Director, USRowing
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