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The Honorable Secretary Pete Buttigieg
US Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590

June 12, 2024

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

I am writing on behalf of the Charles River Conservancy (CRC) to ask you to support the Massachusetts Department of Transportation's (MassDOT) application for the Department of Transportation's Active Transportation Infrastructure Investment Program (ATIIP) grant application for the *Riverwalk at Science Park* (working title) project.

Founded in 2000, CRC's mission is to make the Charles River and its parks a well-maintained network of natural urban places that invite and engage all in their use and stewardship. We work closely with the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) and other stakeholders to promote the vitality of the Charles River and its parks, enhance recreational and educational opportunities through community outreach and programming, and advocate for policies and design interventions that support ecological health, biodiversity, and resilience. Our efforts benefit over 300,000 residents within walking distance of the river, more than 1 million annual visitors, and the river itself.

The *Riverwalk* project aligns with our vision of celebrating and connecting the Charles River and its parks as vibrant centers of public life. The project aims to create a safe and connected active transportation network, including a bike/pedestrian pathway and bridges, to link Boston and Cambridge. This initiative will fill a critical gap in the current infrastructure, providing a safe thoroughfare where none previously existed.

As the ATIIP grant program requires, the *Riverwalk at Science Park* will help improve the safety, efficiency, and reliability of active transportation networks and communities; improve connectivity between active transportation modes and public transportation; enhance the resiliency of on- and off-road active

transportation infrastructure; help protect the environment; and improve quality of life in disadvantaged communities through the delivery of connected active transportation networks and expanded mobility opportunities.

This project will improve the lives of residents, commuters, and visitors to the area by completing a long-standing missing pedestrian and recreational link to the entire surrounding ecosystem within the historic Charles River Basin. Located on land owned by the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), the *Riverwalk* will allow residents and visitors to walk, run, and bicycle safely around the river without having to cross in front of Charles River Dam Road (Route 28), a main thoroughfare. The current sidewalks and bicycle lanes along this road are deficient and in need of significant improvements but are constrained due to Right-of-Way restrictions. The proposed design will move bicycles and pedestrians off the roadway and along a safe, equitable, and accessible recreational path.

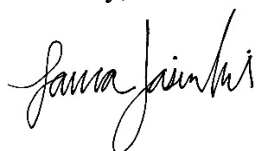
The *Riverwalk* will help to build stronger community connections giving both cities a dynamic gathering space. Importantly, the project will provide shared community infrastructure for all residents of the region, as well as local visitors and tourists. It will improve recreational opportunities that have become essential respites during the pandemic. The new nearby Science Park public transit stop will also help to add to the connectivity of the project. Enhancing the coherence of the park system through this vital connection will have a very real economic impact as well. If more visitors felt they could visit the *Riverwalk at Science Park* as part of a day spent on foot or bike between Boston and Cambridge, we would see a significant increase in spending throughout the region. Additionally, a resilient, accessible, and inclusive *Riverwalk* will have a sustainable, innocuous environmental impact on the river.

CRC is dedicated to the stewardship and active engagement with the Charles River and its parks. The *Riverwalk* project embodies our goals of encouraging public use of green spaces and advocating through placemaking. Today, some residents and visitors are drawn to the Museum of Science while others come to see and use the celebrated nearby park system anchored by the Charles River Esplanade, but the two are rarely approached as a nexus between the most vibrant parts of Boston and Cambridge.

With the recent completion of the *Riverwalk at Science Park* Feasibility Study funded through a grant from the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA), MassDOT, DCR, and the Museum of Science have partnered to begin the process of identifying and securing funds to move into a 25% Design Phase. An award of ATIIP grant funds will allow them the opportunity to do so. I urge you to support this important application.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Laura Jasinski". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being more prominent.

Laura Jasinski
Executive Director, Charles River Conservancy
ljaskinski@thecharles.org