



**WABA**  
WASHINGTON AREA  
BICYCLIST ASSOCIATION

February 13, 2023

The Honorable Peter Buttigieg  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, DC 20590-0001

Re: RAISE Program Grant Application by Montgomery County, Maryland for the Capital Crescent Trail Tunnel Project

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

I am writing to express the support of the Washington Area Bicyclist Association for the application by Montgomery County, Maryland for a Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant for construction of the Capital Crescent Trail Tunnel in Bethesda, Maryland.

Since the first segment of the Capital Crescent Trail opened in 1994, the multi-use trail has grown into one of the most used routes in the Washington, DC region as a vital transportation, recreation, and public health resource for hundreds of thousands of people. Before the existing tunnel and interim Georgetown Branch Trail closed in 2017 to make way for the Purple Line light rail line, the Capital Crescent Trail in Bethesda saw an average of over 15,000 weekly trips and up to 90,000 monthly trips in the summer. It was an active and low-stress route to schools for hundreds of elementary and high school students, a low carbon daily commute for thousands of workers, a popular off-street refuge for solo and group recreation, and a pleasant connection to two bustling retail and entertainment centers.

When the Purple Line Rail project is complete, the new and improved Capital Crescent Trail will run alongside it, linking Georgetown, Bethesda, and downtown Silver Spring, each a major population and commercial center. New bridges over major roads, new neighborhood connections, and direct links better connect residents, workers, and travelers to the nearly 1,000 mile Capital Trail Network, providing attractive transportation and recreation options for current and new trail users from around the region, easily adding thousands of new daily users.

Capital Crescent Trail Tunnel will add a safe, attractive route for trail users. However, without a tunnel for bicyclist and pedestrian use, every trail user will be rerouted to cross MD355/Wisconsin Avenue at grade. They will face the unavoidable risk of crossing Wisconsin Avenue's six lanes and 40,000 daily cars and trucks. On the best of days, crossing here will

require careful adult supervision of kids, wading through crowds, and waiting for a traffic signal that prioritizes moving cars instead of people. On the worst of days, exposing this many people to the multiple lanes, traffic volume and speed, and highway context of state-controlled Wisconsin Avenue will inevitably result in crashes and injuries. Further, pedestrians and bicyclists crossing at grade will slow surface traffic in an already congested area.

High-quality, accessible, and continuous trails are critical to our region's transportation and sustainability goals, Vision Zero commitments, economic competitiveness, and public well-being. Trails provide low stress access to open space and reliable transportation for people of all ages and abilities. Funding the tunnel under Wisconsin Avenue will deliver on a generation of planning and promises with a truly accessible trail between Silver Spring and downtown Bethesda. We urge the support of the RAISE grant application to fund construction of the Capital Crescent Trail Tunnel project.

WABA empowers people to ride bikes, build connections, and transform places. We envision a just and sustainable transportation system where walking, biking, and transit are the best ways to get around. The Capital Crescent Trail Tunnel has the potential to be a transformative option for the safety and comfort for residents and visitors, helping to encourage healthy transportation and recreation, increase local economic development, and support the environment. We encourage you to select Montgomery County's proposal, which promises to benefit thousands of residents across the region.

Julie Meyers  
Acting Executive Director  
Washington Area Bicyclist Association