



April 19, 2022

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

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

I am writing on behalf of the Washington Area Bicyclist Association (WABA) and its more than 7,000 members across the Washington metropolitan area to express our full support for the Arlington County Department of Environmental Services grant application to complete the Cemetery Wall Trail through the Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) discretionary grant program.

For fifty years, WABA has worked to transform the capital region by improving the conditions for people who bike. Our work to advocate for dedicated bike infrastructure, pass laws that promote safe roadway behavior, and provide education programming for all road-users has resulted in a drastically different cultural and political approach to biking for transportation. Biking can and should be an equitable, safe, low-cost, time-saving, and sustainable way to navigate our cities for all residents.

While our primary focus is transportation, we see and treat multi-use trails as the strongest thread connecting people, regardless of their mode, to their built and natural environments. They can't simply be bicycle highways. Trails are often the first and safest option people choose to gain access to the outdoors and commune with friends and family. Good trails are more than a transportation corridor, they're a hub for community. That is the reason we, along with partners like Rails-to-Trails Conservancy and the National Parks Service, founded the Capital Trails Coalition, a collaboration of over 70 public and private organizations, agencies, and volunteer advocates, across six jurisdictions, working to complete a 990-mile interconnected network of multi-use trails in the national capital region.

The Cemetery Wall Trail is one of the 40 top priority Capital Trails Coalition projects that was identified due to its significance as a major gap in the regional trail network as well as the important role it will play to relieve congestion on the overcrowded Mt. Vernon Trail.

The National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board, our region's Metropolitan Planning Organization, and the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOG) have both recently adopted the National Capital Trail Network, which includes the proposed Cemetery Wall Trail. The project is located in the core of the MPO's 1,400-mile trail network and will provide key connections between the Arlington neighborhoods of Pentagon City, Crystal City, and Rosslyn and between Northern Virginia and the District of Columbia.

This project will also increase access to transit, providing a completely off-road connection directly to and between the Arlington Cemetery Metro and Pentagon Metro stations, and facilitate additional access to nearby Rosslyn and Crystal City Metro stations.

This vital connection between Washington, DC, the Arlington National Cemetery, the Pentagon Memorial, the future Pentagon 9/11 Memorial Visitor Center, and the surrounding growing neighborhoods will improve access and safety for the rapidly increasing number of trail users (both locals and tourists) in this region. This project, when finished, can be showcased as a model project of how filling critical gaps in bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure can have exponentially beneficial network effects and how all levels of government can work together to create vibrant and connected communities and public spaces.

We therefore urge you to select Arlington County DES's application for a 2022 RAISE grant to support this critical project.

Sincerely,

Jeremiah Lowery

Jeremiah Lowery
Advocacy Director, Washington Area Bicyclist Association