

## United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

COMMITTEES:  
APPROPRIATIONS  
COMMERCE  
HEALTH, EDUCATION,  
LABOR, AND PENSIONS

September 28, 2023

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE  
Washington, D.C. 20509

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

I am pleased to support the Wisconsin Department of Transportation's (WisDOT) application for Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods (RCN) Program funding through the U.S. Department of Transportation. Awarded funding would help to support WisDOT's proposal titled Reimagining the National Avenue Interchange Planning Study (Study). Working closely with the community and coordinating with other stakeholders, the goals of the Study are to determine and evaluate design alternatives that will reconnect the neighborhoods surrounding the I-43/94 National Avenue Interchange in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Per WisDOT, the Study will focus on Walker's Point and Walker Square, predominantly Hispanic and Latino neighborhoods that are historically disadvantaged with over 40% of residents currently experiencing poverty. The National Avenue Interchange was constructed in the heart of these neighborhoods and disconnected the neighborhood street grid, decreased pedestrian and bike connections, and created safety deficiencies. Built in the mid-1960s, this elevated interchange removed more than 20 acres of traditional neighborhood fabric and created a nine-block void in the heart of the Near South Side of Milwaukee.

The National Avenue Interchange runs through historically diverse and traditional urban neighborhoods and its ramps distribute traffic onto residential streets, requiring residents, businesses and students to navigate local streets where freeway-bound or exiting traffic is present. The configuration of the entrance and exit ramps is original to the initial construction of the elevated freeway, interacting with local neighborhood streets in a manner that impairs the quality of life in the neighborhood and undermines public safety. Additionally, ramps flank a middle school on S. 9<sup>th</sup> Street and separate it from a neighboring elementary school adjacent to Walker Square Park.

WisDOT's much-needed planning Study will use language translation services and best practices to conduct an intensive public engagement process to identify the needs and desires of the community adjacent to the National Avenue Interchange. Among the topics the Study will examine will be decreasing the interchange footprint, matching land use with community needs, and reconnecting the neighborhood through improved pedestrian, bicycle, transit, vehicular mobility and reduced intermodal

conflicts. The Study will also include a detailed analysis of traffic patterns at the interchange to arrive at an alternative that will improve the public realm, reduce vehicle miles traveled and greenhouse gas emissions, and reclaim valuable land for community use and future investment. A community-based placemaking and complete street vision will be developed for the four acres of land that WisDOT would potentially give back to the community due to ramp configurations at the Interchange.

I strongly support proposals that will equitably improve Wisconsin's transportation infrastructure, benefiting our economy and helping to increase opportunities for our residents and our communities at large. For this reason, I respectfully request that full and fair consideration be given to WisDOT's RCN application. Please keep my office updated on the progress of this application by email at [projects\\_grants@baldwin.senate.gov](mailto:projects_grants@baldwin.senate.gov). Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tammy Baldwin". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Tammy Baldwin  
United States Senator