



April 14, 2016

The Honorable Anthony R. Foxx, Secretary of Transportation
United States Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave SE
Washington, DC 20590

RE: TIGER VIII Funding - I-579 “Cap” Urban Connector Project

Dear Secretary Foxx,

Green Building Alliance (GBA) would like to express our strong support the proposal from the Sports & Exhibition Authority of Pittsburgh & Allegheny County (SEA) for the I-579 “Cap” Urban Connector project proposal submitted for TIGER VIII funding on behalf of the City of Pittsburgh and Allegheny County.

Located between Downtown Pittsburgh and a prime, very visible 28-acre site contiguously located in the Lower Hill District neighborhood, the I-579 “Cap” Urban Connector is integral to both the city’s and overall region’s success – it will be transformative for the Pittsburgh region. Simply stated, I-579 is Pittsburgh’s I-77 or I-85.

The “Cap” project is a critical component of the overall Lower Hill redevelopment effort with significant economic, environmental, and social impacts. It will invigorate opportunities within the Lower Hill and Downtown communities via a new point of strong connection while loosening the constraints of existing infrastructure; it takes into account a community that has been on the wrong side of transportation decisions and disparity since urban renewal efforts of the 1960s while facilitating the strengthening of the community. The project will be a link to economic opportunities with people as the focus instead of cars and an emphasis on social equity.

The “Cap” Urban Connector will facilitate pedestrian and bicycle movement, create greenspace, and help unlock the next wave of reinvestment, redevelopment, and revitalization. By creating connections, this project opens an underserved neighborhood to engage more significantly through tangible, visible connections that will facilitate workforce development and access, mobility connections, and overall inclusion.

GBA has had planning discussions with SEA about this opportunity as far back as 2007 – first with respect to the adjacent CONSOL Energy Center arena development and then subsequently including the Pittsburgh Penguins. We served on their Sustainability Stakeholders Group during its 2011-2012 duration. We have provided support letters for various aspects of the project since 2014, and continue to wholeheartedly support the project.

As a nonprofit organization, GBA (a chapter of the U.S. Green Building Council) inspires the creation of healthy, high-performing places for everyone by providing leadership that connects knowledge, transformative ideas, and collaborative action. One of our signature programs is the Pittsburgh 2030 District, which we created, convene, and facilitate. The District has 85 property partners, representing 438 properties and almost 68 million square feet of building space — 69% of the total in the Downtown and Oakland neighborhoods (the second- and third-largest downtowns in Pennsylvania). All are voluntarily committed to the 2030 Challenge’s aggressive goal of 50% reductions in energy use, water consumption, and transportation emissions below baselines by 2030.

With 23 years of local and national green building experience, GBA’s strength lies in our leadership, partnerships, and ability to identify strategic programs and projects. As such, we unequivocally support this important project.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Aurora Sharrard in blue ink.

Aurora Sharrard, PhD, LEED AP BD+C
Executive Director & Vice President of Innovation, auroras@gbapgh.org

Handwritten signature of Anna J. Sietken in blue ink, with "(Snordon)" written in parentheses next to it.

Anna J. Sietken, LEED AP BD+C
Vice President of Strategic Engagement &
Pittsburgh 2030 District Director, annas@gbapgh.org