



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: FY2016 TIGER Discretionary Grant
I-579 “Cap” Urban Connector Project**

Dear Secretary Foxx,

The Pittsburgh Marriott City Center fully supports this request for a TIGER Discretionary Grant.

The “I-579 Cap Urban Connector Project is a brilliant and innovative idea that will connect the “Lower Hill District” with “Downtown”. It will be a “green space” and a jobs creator for a disadvantaged area.

Please see all of the additional reasons and benefits below.

Project Overview

- The Sports & Exhibition Authority of Pittsburgh and Allegheny County (SEA) is submitting an application for a FY2015 TIGER Discretionary Grant (“TIGER VII”).
- The SEA is requesting TIGER VII funds to help pay for construction costs of I-579 “Cap” Urban Connector (I-579 “Cap”).
- The “Cap” structure will span over the Interstate 579 Crosstown Boulevard highway creating a new urban public connector that will simplify pedestrian movement and will create an inviting, accessible route for walking and biking between the Hill District and Downtown.
- The I-570 “Cap” will be an independent, standalone structure with surface improvements consisting of ADA pedestrian and bicycle pathways, stormwater management and other sustainable strategies, landscaping and other fixed site components that will create a public urban open space of approximately 3 acres.

Project History and Goals

- As part of urban renewal in the 1950s, the Hill District, then a predominantly African American community was declared blighted; 95 acres were demolished and 8,000 people and 413 businesses were displaced.
- Also during the 1950s, the I-579 Crosstown Boulevard highway was constructed between the Lower Hill District and Downtown, further severing the link between the two neighborhoods. It remains a physical and psychological barrier to this day.
- The Hill District is one of Pittsburgh's oldest residential neighborhoods, but since the 1950s it has lost more than 80% of its population. The Greater Hill District remains a distressed neighborhood with 17.2% unemployment and 39.2% of residents living below the poverty line.
- This project will reconnect the underserved and disadvantaged Lower Hill District with downtown Pittsburgh, and it's a critical piece to support the new, mixed-use redevelopment of the 28-acre site of the former civic arena.
- Important redevelopment is taking place in the vicinity – US Steel Headquarters Building, Energy Innovation Center, and others. We expect \$379 million in private investment in adjacent development as the “Cap” and the other infrastructure is in place. The “Cap” project will help keep that momentum going and increase its impact in the City and the Hill District.
- The I-579 “Cap” will utilize green infrastructure strategies, including capturing the majority of stormwater on the site. Plants and trees will be native or adapted, and this new open space will add to the city's urban forest cover. This new greenspace will contribute to the reduction of urban heat island effects, and will mitigate noise.
- The “Cap” project will be an important part in a cohesive corridor between Downtown and Oakland, two large centers of employment, education and essential services.

TIGER Priorities

- The project strongly aligns with US DOT's priorities and “ladders of opportunity” by creating i) new and safe connections needed to reconnect people from a historically distressed neighborhood (Hill District) to centers of employment, education and essential services (downtown central business district), ii) promote workforce development, and iii) contribute to community revitalization.
- This project will be transformative for the underserved Hill District community and downtown. The I-579 “Cap” will extend the economic strengths of downtown to the east.
- The project will open a new avenue for the community to grow and prosper by establishing a connector between a high economic generator (Downtown) and a disadvantaged neighborhood (Hill District).

- The I-579 "Cap" project is top regional project with multi-agency partnerships, and related stakeholders.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Morris Siyman
General Manger
Pittsburgh Marriott City Center