



STATE OF MICHIGAN
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
LANSING

GRETCHEN WHITMER
GOVERNOR

GARLIN GILCHRIST II
LT. GOVERNOR

November 24, 2021

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
Secretary
United States Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Re: Support for the I-375 Improvement Project Under the Historic Bipartisan Infrastructure Deal

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

Thank you for your tireless efforts to help pass the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. This is a historic, game-changing piece of legislation for Michigan, your native Indiana, and every state. It will build on progress we have made to fix the damn roads, including my \$3.5 billion Rebuilding Michigan Plan to expand and build up state highways without an increase at the pump while supporting over 45,000 jobs. Recently, I also signed a bipartisan budget that will repair or replace nearly 100 local bridges in counties across Michigan, and we have worked together to create over 15,000 auto jobs and stayed laser-focused on attracting and retaining business investment that will build on our legacy as the place that put the world on wheels. With the funding we expect to receive from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, Michigan will continue making more bold investments in our roads, bridges, pipes, high-speed internet, and electric vehicle infrastructure all while creating tens of thousands of good-paying jobs. I cannot wait to see all the progress we will make together.

As we celebrate the recent passage of the infrastructure bill, I want to commend your recent remarks amplifying the funding the bill provides to address racial inequalities in U.S. highway design. The Reconnecting Communities program contained in the historic legislation will aid in correcting past highway designs that erected barriers to mobility and opportunity and disproportionately affected communities of color. I know you welcome the ability to provide a generational opportunity to right these past wrongs, and I look forward to our working together to implement these efforts right here in the state of Michigan.

As your Department implements the Reconnecting Communities program, I write to highlight my administration's focus to complete planning and begin design efforts to replace I-375, a depressed freeway, that when built more than 50 years ago, demolished the prominent African American neighborhoods of Black Bottom and Paradise Valley in the city of Detroit and created a barrier between the central business district and neighborhoods to the east.



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In 1959, the city of Detroit, Wayne County, and the Michigan State Highway Department (renamed in 1973 to Michigan Department of Transportation) began construction of I-375 through Hastings Street, the central business district that bridged the communities of color in Black Bottom and Paradise Valley. Numerous blocks of commercial and residential buildings were levelled to make way for the depressed freeway and urban renewal. Although I-375 featured a number of cross-bridges, many properties declined due to reduced connectivity and more so because the community's economic and residential base had been substantially dislocated. The I-375 freeway opened in 1964.

Now, nearly three generations later, we have an opportunity to eliminate this obstacle and provide easier access to better jobs, services, and quality of life to the residents of adjacent areas of persistent poverty. After nearly 60 years of use, the segment consisting of I-375, the I-75/I-375 Interchange, and bridges is nearing the end of its useful service life and requires modernization.

As you have stated that the highway design corrections your Department may fund will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis, I welcome hosting you to tour the I-375 project and to visit with the community members engaged with the redesign effort so you can see firsthand how the project is a perfect candidate for the Reconnecting Communities program.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Gretchen Whitmer".

Gretchen E. Whitmer
Governor of Michigan

cc: The Honorable Mike Duggan, Mayor, City of Detroit
Mr. Paul Ajegba, P.E., Director, Michigan Department of Transportation