



April 11, 2022

Secretary Pete Buttigieg
Office of the US Secretary of Transportation
United States Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave SE
Washington D.C. 20590

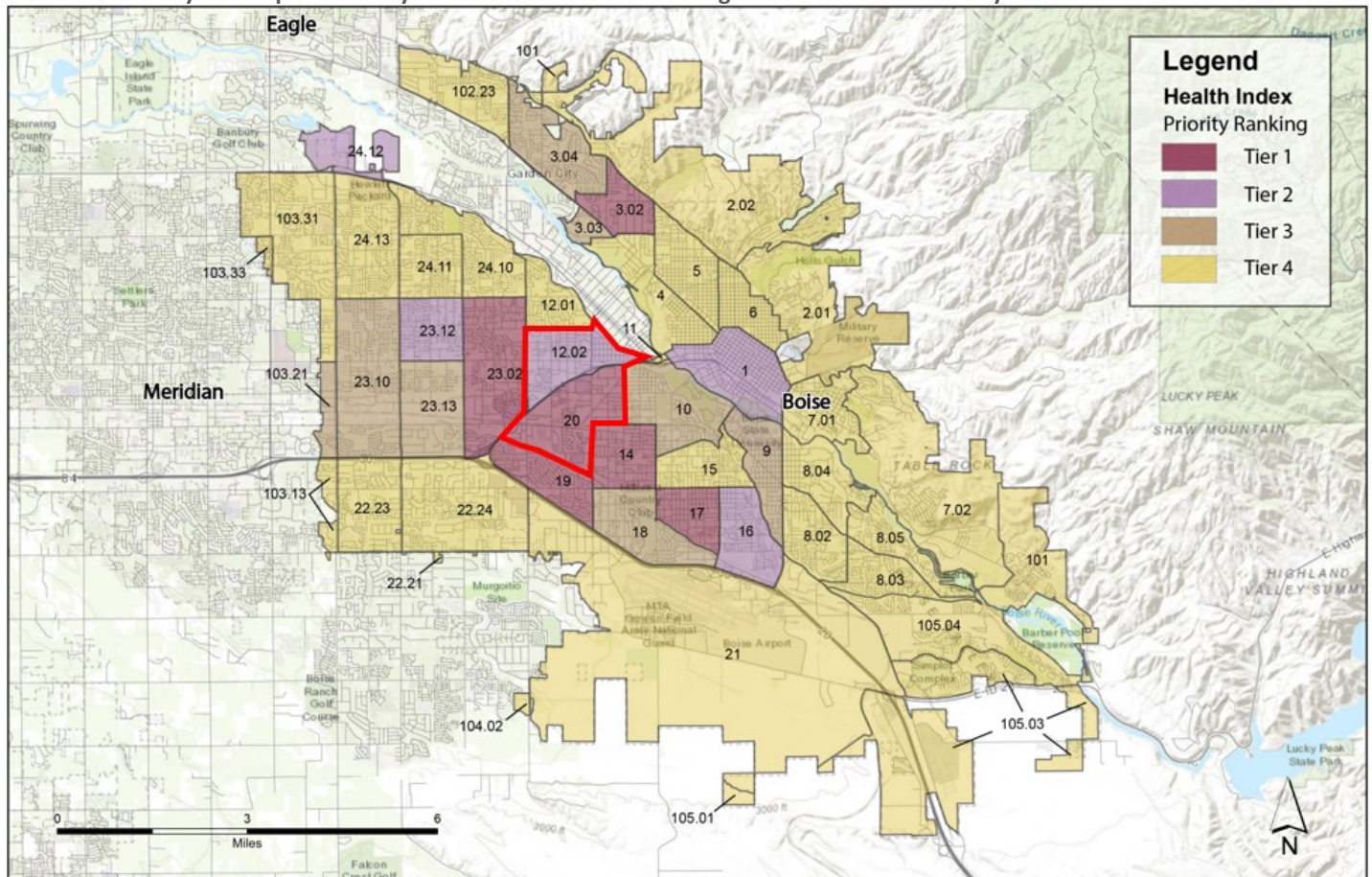
RE: Letter of Support for Ada County Highway District RAISE Grant in Boise & Garden City, Idaho

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

The application for Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) funding by Ada County Highway District and its partners is one that myself and my company, Vitruvian Planning, fully support. We have been involved in transportation planning and design in Garden City and Boise, Idaho, for two decades and have worked extensively in these two cities to make its streets safer and more sustainable.

The neighborhoods that are subject to this proposed project have health and transportation challenges beyond those identified by USDOT in historically disadvantaged communities data. In 2020 our firm completed a Community Development Analysis for the City of Boise that was the first in our state to look at factors beyond housing access and affordability to understand the deeper issues related to housing, including access to health services, transportation, food, and other topics. In all, we mapped more than 50 different metrics and weighted them to determine the Census tracts within Boise that were determined to be the most “in need” of interventions, including sidewalks, safe street crossings, and disadvantaged populations. The map below shows the areas within Boise, outlined in red, that are the subject of ACHD’s application.

Boise Community Development Analysis: Tracts 12.02 & 20 Showing as Most “In Need” in City of Boise



More specifically, our Boise project utilized the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) PLACES data, which includes several Census tract-level metrics stemming from their Behavioral Risk Factors Surveillance Survey. The tracts that are the subject of ACHD’s application in Boise, as well as Garden City, are among the most challenged in Boise when it comes to poor physical health. The image below shows the CDC’s data on physical inactivity, indicating the tracts that are the subject of ACHD’s application (outlined in red) are among the worst in terms of physical inactivity rates in Ada County, Idaho.

Further, CDC’s data shows these Census tracts have the worst rates in Ada County for the health factors identified in the table at right. These health outcomes are proven to be improved when people can safely and comfortably walk, bike, and take transit to access daily needs. The table indicates with an X where the tracts subject to ACHD’s RAISE grant request have conditions among the worst in Ada County.

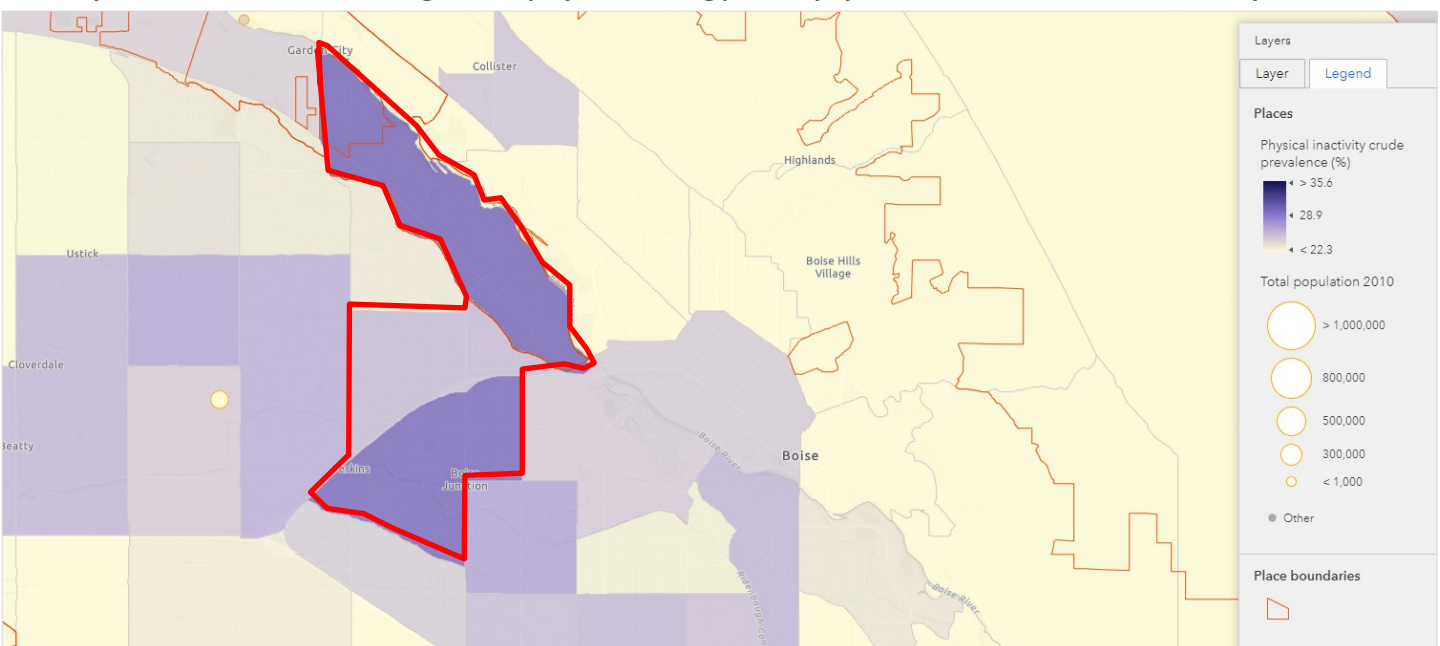
Health Outcomes	Garden City— Tract 11	Boise— Tract 12.02	Boise— Tract 20
High Blood Pressure	X	X	X
Cancer		X	
Diabetes	X		
Heart Disease	X		X
Obesity	X		X
COPD	X		X
Depression	X	X	X

In addition to unhealthy conditions related to physical activity, these areas also flag as some of the worst in our region when it comes to rates of asthma and COPD, which has been correlated to high rates of air pollution due to people living adjacent to busy highways. Studies show that kids who grow up next to major roadways have asthma rates similar to children who grow up in secondhand smoke households. Providing connections and safe crossings for people who walk, bike, and take transit will help reduce air pollution in these areas.

Equity & Safety: Beyond health, safety needs related to equity are the most prominent element that would be addressed in the funding of the ACHD RAISE grant request. Chinden Boulevard (US Highway 20-26), for which ACHD has identified several crossing upgrades and connecting sidewalks, is a National Highway System route where equity has not properly been addressed for many years by the Federal Highway Administration in its approval of projects along Chinden Boulevard.

In Idaho, 40% of pedestrian deaths occur on roadways managed and engineered by the Idaho Transportation Department; compared to ITD managing only 8% of Idaho’s roadway miles. Chinden represents everything the national studies by the National Transportation Safety Board, Governors Highway Safety Association, and Insurance Institute for Highway Safety have identified as the reasons behind our country’s massive increase in pedestrian death: Chinden

Poor Physical Health: Tracts containing ACHD’s projects showing poorest physical health conditions in Ada County, Idaho



lacks sidewalks west of 44th Street; Chinden lacks safe, frequent crossings throughout Garden City; and Chinden is designed to induce speeds and speeding from motorists that are unsafe for any road user. In 2019, our firm did an analysis for Garden City along Chinden. The table at right shows the alarming data we unearthed when looking at pedestrian fatality and crash rates for Garden City and compared them to Ada County as a whole. The people of Garden City who walk are killed by motorists at a rate 2.7 times higher than those who walk in all of Ada County. These Garden City pedestrians are hit by motorists at a rate 1.4 times higher than their fellow Ada County residents.

	Pedestrian	
	Fatality Rate	Crash Rate
Garden City	3.6	41.5
Ada County	1.3	33.8
Garden City Rate Compared to Ada Co.	2.7 x higher	1.4 x higher

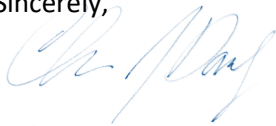
Sources:
 ITD crash data, 1997-2015
 Census population estimates, 1997-2015

The images at the bottom of the first two pages of this letter showcase why this is the case along Chinden. Funding of ACHD’s application will help implement the necessary crossings of Chinden, link to other sidewalks on connecting streets within ACHD’s system, and hopefully spur a greater regional and local discussion over the need to have other agencies such as ITD add sidewalks along Chinden.

From an overall demographic standpoint, 15.2% (or nearly 1,800) of Garden City’s residents are disabled, according to the US Census 2019 5-year estimates. This is notably higher than Ada County as a whole, where 10.3% of its residents are disabled. One out of every 12 households in Garden City lacks access to a vehicle, compared to only one in every 27 households in Ada County lacking access to vehicle. Garden City households represent 7% of Ada County’s households without a vehicle despite Garden City having only 3% of the county’s households.

In summary, the Garden City application for RAISE funding is one that FHWA should view as vital to its goals for rebuilding American infrastructure through a lens of sustainability and equity. It’s the least FHWA can do for the people of Garden City, who have for too long been subject to the unsustainable and inequitable policies of our region, state, and federal transportation policies and design practices.

Sincerely,



Chris Danley
 Vitruvian Planning



Don Kostelec
 Vitruvian Planning

Left: A man in a wheelchair must use the two-way left turn lane of Chinden Boulevard in Garden City due to lack of sidewalks. Right: A woman must cross at an unprotected, unmarked crosswalk to access a food outlet at Chinden & 38th Street in Garden City, where ACHD proposes to build an protected, signalized crossing for residents to safely cross.

