

VIA CERTIFIED MAIL. RETURN RECEIPT REQUESTED VIA EMAIL

July 1, 2024

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg, Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE
Washington DC 20590

RE: Appalachian Corridor H - Parsons to Davis, Federal Project: ACNH-0484(290)

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

Mr. Buttigieg, please help us protect our community from the worst harms of highway construction. As you recently pointed out in your *Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods Program*: “*Sometimes roads in the past have done the opposite of what they want to do ... Dividing or damaging neighborhoods.*” We are deeply troubled by the prospects of the harm that will accrue from the WV Division of Highway’s presently recommended southern alignment (ROPA) for the 10-mile stretch of Corridor H between Parsons and Davis. ROPA, as designed, will do precisely what you addressed: sever links between different parts of our community and disrupt our local economy.

We are a group of local business owners in the small rural towns of Thomas and Davis, West Virginia. We represent a thriving, sustainable tourism economy based on our assets: scenic beauty, the Blackwater River and Canyon, trails, wildlife, mountains, and charming small towns alive with art and music. A last-century highway design could be a fatal blow to our *new* economy here on the mountaintop. A well-designed northern alignment will protect our businesses, quality of life, connectedness, and serve the people who live and work in our community.

In our lovely Tucker County, we have two State Parks, a National Forest, two Wilderness Areas, and a National Wildlife Refuge. These rugged and scenic landscapes are enjoyed by residents and bring tourists who love fishing, hunting, kayaking, hiking, skiing, and biking. Our two small towns, destinations in their own right, are a vibrant scene of homegrown businesses that include coffee shops, art galleries, restaurants, specialty shops, and the iconic live music venue The Purple Fiddle.

ROPA will greatly compromise our local resources. A logical and less environmentally destructive northern route (termed the Blackwater Avoidance Alignment) is readily available, but, despite the Federal Highway Administration’s insistence that the state study this northern alternative, we are skeptical that it will be a serious study, or taken seriously, by the WV Division of Highways.

Because of the scenic, historic, and ecological value of the Blackwater River watershed and the major threat the potential construction of Corridor H’s ROPA route presents, *American Rivers* has recently named the Blackwater as one of the country’s ten most threatened rivers in the United States. Besides undeniable impacts to a National Register-eligible historic district, a major threat is the potential for acid mine drainage that would be created during construction and unleashed into the North Fork of the Blackwater River.

We are writing to you, Mr. Buttigieg, because you want to build highways right. We all know of communities across the US that “went to sleep” when a highway project went wrong. We can’t let a 30-year-old highway design

be the fatal blow to our new economy and our way of life. We kindly ask for your support for the logical and best alignment for this ten mile stretch of Corridor H: The Northern Alignment.

Sincerely,

Alice Fleischman, President
East West Printing, Inc.
Davis, WV

Robin McClintock
Business Owner
Davis, WV

Sandra Goss
Walt Ranalli, Owners
Sirianni's Restaurant
Davis, WV

Jessica Luscombe, Owner
The Wandering Caravan
Davis, WV

Matt Marcus, Manager
Blackwater Bikes
Davis, WV

Nancy Luscombe
Doc's Guesthouse
Davis, WV

Linda Reeves, Proprietor
Studio Gallery
Thomas, WV

Angie and Jason Downs
The Adventure Guild Game Shop
Thomas, WV

Ira Burns, Owner
Burns Auto Care
Thomas, WV

William Peterson
Business and Property Owner
Davis, WV

Robert and Melissa Borowitz, Owners
Hellbenders Burritos
Davis, WV

Joy Malinowski, Owner
The Billy Motel and Bar/Ish
Davis, WV

Matthew Lee, Owner
Elkins Physical Therapy (EPTS)
Thomas, WV

John Bright, Principal Owner
The Purple Fiddle
Thomas, WV

Ryan Gaujot, President
Green Rivers
Thomas, WV

Cade and Carrie Archuleta, Owners
Tip Top Coffee
Thomas, WV

Annie Mealey, Owner
Wild Ginger and Spice
Davis, WV

Jane Browning
Ranger Jane's
Thomas, WV

Pete Johnson, Developer
River Walk
Davis, WV

Kurt Litzau, Owner
The Davis Depot
Davis, WV

Ben Nelson, Owner
MUD Ceramics
Thomas, WV

Libbey Holewski, Program Director
Appalachian Expeditions
Davis, WV

Erica Fritz, Owner
Bright Bear Yoga
Thomas, WV

Angie Shockley
Scarlet Gray
Thomas, WV

Shelagh Sitterson and Franz Harb
FSRM LLC/Davisyard LLC
Thomas, WV

Nellie Rose, Owner
Nellie Rose Textiles
Thomas, WV

Martin Wach, Member
Wach's Gallery and Gardens
Davis, WV

Scott Montgomery, Owner
Scottie Lawn Care
Davis, WV

Barbara Weaner, MSN, FNP
Menla Mountain Health
Thomas, WV

Deana Ritchey, Owner
Trailhead Coffee Shop
Davis, WV

Shaena Crossland, Owner
Sister Witches Crafting Company
Davis, WV

Don Kuhns
Buxton Landstreet Gallery
Thomas, WV