



April 13, 2022

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE
Washington, D.C. 20590 0001

RE: FY2022 DOT: Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) Application: Quitman County, Mississippi

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

As director of Mississippi State University's Fred Carl Jr. Small Town Center, I am pleased to submit this letter of support for the Quitman County, Mississippi's 2022 RAISE application for Riverside Road infrastructure improvements.

As a community design center, we have worked with the City of Marks and Quitman County for over a decade to design and implement a cultural trail reflecting the important civil rights history of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and his Poor People's Campaign which began in Marks. In addition to planning and implementing portions of the trail, we have designed destination markers and wayfinding signage. If Quitman county is awarded this RAISE opportunity, we will continue our longstanding partnership with the county to help connect the cultural trail to the Riverside Road trail, thereby linking two important recreational and tourism opportunities for the region.

With over 40 years history of helping small towns and rural regions with design and planning services, our community design center understands the struggle to obtain funding for recreational infrastructure, which is sorely needed in these communities. Residents of small towns rarely gain access to biking and walking trails that are commonly found in larger metro areas. Yet, these trails are critically needed to create healthier communities.

Quitman County is located within the Mississippi Delta, one of the most obese regions in the nation. Infrastructure for a biking and walking trail on Riverside Road is critical to improve health outcomes for the region. Funding this trail would be beneficial to residents and visitors alike, providing means for healthier lifestyles, as well as economic impact through tourism.

I fully support Quitman County's application for creating the Riverside Road trail and ask that the evaluation committee give strong consideration to providing the requested funds to this effort.

Sincerely,

Leah Kemp, AIA

Director

Fred Carl Jr. Small Town Center

Mississippi State College of Architecture, Art + Design