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February 27, 2026

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

Re: Support for the City of Dyersville's BUILD Grant Application – Connections for Economic Freedom Project

Dear Secretary Duffy:

I am writing to you, the Mayor of Dyersville, Iowa, to personally request your approval of our application for a \$25 million Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) grant. Our project, Connections for Economic Freedom, is the most significant transportation infrastructure investment our community has ever pursued. We have spent the last ten years planning, designing, and building local support for this effort, and I can tell you without hesitation that this project will not happen without federal partnership through the BUILD program.

Dyersville is a rural community of about 4,500 people that services over 9,000 people daily in northeast Iowa. Many know us as the home of the Field of Dreams Movie Site, which draws more than 275,000 visitors each year. But what visitors don't see are the challenges our residents face every day. Two waterways—the North Fork Maquoketa River and Bear Creek—run right through our town, and when they flood, entire neighborhoods become islands. Since 2000, we have received six federal disaster declarations for flooding. During those events, our volunteer fire department and ambulance service cannot reach parts of town. There is no alternate route. People are cut off from emergency help, the hospital, and their jobs.

On top of the flooding, the Canadian National Railway runs through Dyersville with many train movements a day. When a train blocks our at-grade crossing, traffic stops, and so do our emergency responders. We have had seven complete seven-day shutdowns of that crossing for maintenance. The nearest grade-separated crossing is many miles away, and 35 percent of the freight moving through town is chemicals and fertilizer. Our community has lived with this risk for too long.

The Connections for Economic Freedom project addresses all these problems in one coordinated effort. It will build two new bridges—one over Bear Creek and one over the North Fork

Maquoketa River—creating reliable routes that stay open even during a 100-year flood. It will construct a grade-separated overpass over the CN Railway, eliminating the hazardous at-grade crossing for the first time in our city's history. And it will add 2.5 miles of new trails, sidewalks, and bike lanes, connecting neighborhoods to schools, parks, downtown, the hospital, and the regional 30-mile Heritage Trail. Our emergency response time to the southwest part of town currently averages nearly 13 minutes. This project will cut that almost in half.

Dyersville has done its homework and put its own money on the table. We have committed \$4.18 million in local match from General Obligation Bonds, Tax Increment Financing, city-owned right-of-way, and staff time. For a community our size, that is a serious commitment. We have held public hearings, our engineers have advanced the design, we have the support from CN Railway, and the project is listed in the Iowa Statewide Transportation Improvement Program. The Iowa Department of Transportation, our state legislators, the Chamber of Commerce, and our regional planning agency have all submitted letters of support. This project is designed, supported, and ready to go.

I want to share what this means to the people I serve. Senior citizens at the Ellen Kennedy Living Center walk miles each day but have to carefully plan every step because there are no connected sidewalks or safe crossings. Families in the Crimson Leaf Estates Mobile Home Park are cut off from the rest of town whenever a train blocks the crossing or the creek rises. These are the people this project is for, and they have shown up at every public meeting.

We are growing! A nonprofit partner is investing over \$55 million in constructing a professional ballpark at the Field of Dreams Movie Site to host more than 38 special events this year, including the 2026 MLB game. Tournament traffic grew 240 percent last year, with well over 600 teams from 23 states. Our population grew 10 percent from 2010 to 2020, while many rural Iowa communities were shrinking. Our transportation network was not built for this growth, and without the bridges, overpasses, and trail connections this project delivers, the safety challenges we face will only get worse.

Rural communities like ours do not often get a chance at a project of this scale. We have worked many years to get here, and our community is united behind it. I respectfully ask that you approve our BUILD grant application. Your support will make a lasting difference for the families, businesses, and visitors who depend on Dyersville every day. Thank you for your consideration, and I would welcome the chance to speak with you or your staff about our project at any time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jeff Jacque".

Jeff Jacque,
Mayor