

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

October 25, 2023

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

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

We are writing in support of the Regional Transportation Commission of Washoe County's (RTC) and the City of Las Vegas' collaborative application to the for Strengthening Mobility and Revolutionizing Transportation (SMART) Grants Program to explore the viability of implementing AI-powered adaptive pedestrian detection systems in various pedestrian settings and contexts. If successful, these technologies can significantly reduce pedestrian-related crashes and improve traffic flow along our community's roadways. Both agencies are working together to lead similar experiments in two very different regions of the state and will jointly be supported by the University of Nevada, Reno on this project to provide data-driven metrics of success. We would also note, that Senator Cortez Masto worked specifically to get this program included in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law given the innovative transportation technologies that are being utilized in our state of Nevada.

For its part, the RTC will pilot this project along Plumb Lane, a critical east-west arterial in Reno, Nevada. The Plumb Lane corridor experiences heavy pedestrian activity that fluctuates throughout the day, and also experiences heavy variations in vehicle traffic due to the nearby commercial developments, extensive multi-family housing, multiple school zones and its function as a critical bus route and the main arterial to the Reno-Tahoe International Airport. The current signal timing is on a set schedule and does not respond to changes in pedestrian or vehicular flow – impacting safety and corridor congestion. There is a growing need to accommodate and improve pedestrian access in the area, while also adjusting traffic operations to manage multi-modal flows along the entire corridor.

The City of Las Vegas will pilot this project in the vicinity of the Fremont Street corridor – a pedestrian mall in downtown Las Vegas that attracts more than 26 million visitors per year. Fremont Street is a five-block semi-enclosed corridor in which large numbers of pedestrians walk across the intersecting streets and to nearby hotels, casinos, and restaurants.

The overall pilot plan proposes to include these projects in multiple locations across the Washoe RTC and Las Vegas jurisdictions:

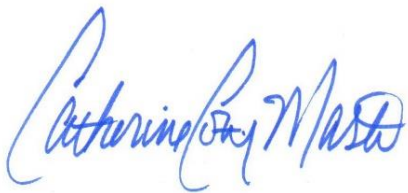
- Install AI-powered pedestrian detection systems at traffic signals, rectangular rapid-flashing beacon systems, and pedestrian hybrid beacon systems to detect pedestrians waiting to cross roads.

- Adjust traffic signal timings and unprotected crossing flasher durations in real-time based on pedestrian volumes and speed to provide a safer crossing time window.
- In conjunction with the detection system, implement an inclusive push button system that would allow vulnerable road users to receive longer crossing times by using a government-issued concession card.
- Install an adaptive traffic signal system to adjust traffic signal timings along the entire corridor to compensate for adjustments needed during periods of heavy pedestrian activity or seasonal fluctuations in traffic due to special events or holiday periods.

The RTC and City of Las Vegas are the only two entities in Nevada with approved Vision Zero Safety Action Plans. They take improving safety in our communities very seriously and will use this grant to advance pedestrian safety initiatives locally, with the opportunity to share these solutions with agency partners statewide.

We are excited to support both agencies as they test new safety technologies in different environments and situations, including prioritizing pedestrian movement in tourist locations, school zones, high speed arterials, Justice40 communities, and the urban downtown core. For these reasons, we support their efforts and request you give their application your full and fair consideration. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact our offices.

Sincerely,



Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senate



Jacky Rosen
United States Senate



Dina Titus
United States House of Representatives



Mark Amodei
United States House of Representatives



Susie Lee
United States House of Representatives



Steven Horsford
United States House of Representatives