



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 26, 2022

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Transportation Planning for New River Gorge Region

Gateway Communities Hinges on Pending Federal Safe Streets Grant

Summersville, W.Va. (Oct. 26, 2022) – Improvements in pedestrian, bicycle, and motorized safety in the gateway communities of the New River Gorge hinge on the success of a \$199,200 U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) planning grant submitted September 20 by the Fayette Raleigh Metropolitan Planning Organization.

Jina Belcher, executive director, and Andrew Davis, director of strategic redevelopment, of the New River Gorge Regional Development Authority (NRGRDA) assisted with the Safe Streets and Roads for All regional planning grant, which includes a local match of \$49,800, bringing the total to \$249,000.

If the grant is approved, the Fayette Raleigh Metropolitan Planning Organization and NRGRDA will complete a regional safety action plan within 12 months of the award. Davis said the action plan would likely lead to a larger, more substantial federal infrastructure grant to help implement the recommendations.

Davis said the need is clearcut. “The roadway fatality rate for the Fayette-Raleigh region is 15.32 per 100,000 people, significantly higher than the national rate of 11.7, as we noted in the grant proposal,” Davis said, “The influx of tourists via our gateway communities has necessitated the strengthening of existing safety plans, policies, projects, economic development strategies, including our Gateway Communities Park plan.”

Belcher said the Safe Streets and Roads for All grant program traditionally benefits more urban areas than rural because urban cities have more sophisticated data sets on pedestrian, bicycle and vehicle transportation. “We have submitted a solid grant proposal showing the tremendous need for transportation safety throughout the New River Gorge, particularly with the New River Gorge National Park and Preserve designation attracting more visitors,” said Belcher. Based on our experience working with federal partners like the Appalachian Regional Commission and the U.S. Economic Development Administration to plan and implement infrastructure projects in our two counties, we feel that the Raleigh and Fayette County’s designation on DOT’s Disadvantaged Communities map does not reflect our experience with the economic and social factors on the ground.

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About New River Gorge Regional Development Authority: The New River Gorge Regional Development Authority’s (NRGRDA) mission is to initiate, facilitate and support the economic and community development efforts within the counties of Fayette, Nicholas, Raleigh, and Summers located in this region of southern West Virginia. NRGRDA stimulates the regional economy through business expansion and retention efforts, including an extensive portfolio of financial services; the management of sites for new companies locating to our region; and serving as a point of access for local service providers which offer a variety of technical assistance for business owners.

The West Virginia Hive is the entrepreneurship program of the NRGRDA and the administrator of the Country Roads Angel Network (CRAN). More can be found at <https://nrgrda.org/>