



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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U.S. Department of Transportation Approves Safe Streets Grant For Fayette-Raleigh Counties of the NRG Region

Beckley, W.Va. (Feb. 6, 2023) – Local leaders will be able to plan improvements in pedestrian, bicycle, and motorized safety in the gateway communities throughout Fayette and Raleigh counties of the New River Gorge, thanks to approval of a \$199,200 U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) grant. The Safe Streets and Roads for All proposal was submitted September 20, 2022, by the Fayette Raleigh Metropolitan Planning Organization.

New River Gorge Regional Development Authority (NRGRDA) assisted with the Safe Streets regional planning grant, which includes a local match of \$49,800, bringing the total to \$249,000 in collaboration with Region 1 and Region 4 Planning and Development Councils.

“We want to thank Senators Joe Manchin and Shelley Moore Capito for their active support, and we will continue working together in creating the action plan and throughout its implementation,” said Jina Belcher, Executive Director of the NRGRDA. She said rural communities face an uphill battle competing for resources against well-funded and statistically prepared urban areas. “Our team effort – local, state and federal leaders all chipping in collaboratively -- made the difference,” added Belcher. “We’re continuously thankful for our Regional Planning and Development Council partners that help us secure funding and implement plans and projects that are paramount to the future growth of the region.”

The grant will allow the Fayette-Raleigh Metropolitan Planning Organization, NRGRDA, and local community stakeholders to complete a regional safety action plan within 12 months. The

action plan would likely lead to a larger, more substantial federal infrastructure grant to help implement the recommendations.

Andrew Davis, NRGRDA Director of Strategic Redevelopment said transportation safety improvements are essential. “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,” said Davis. “The influx of tourists via our gateway communities has necessitated the strengthening of existing safety plans, policies, projects, and economic development strategies, including our Gateway Communities Park plan.”

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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/>