



Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County

Gateway to Heritage Walking Improvements

EVERY PLACE COUNTS DESIGN CHALLENGE APPLICATION



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Figure 1: Existing walking conditions at D.B. Todd Jr. Boulevard and Jefferson Street, with I-40 depressed below grade just beyond the intersection.



Problem Identification and Community Assessment

Jefferson Street serves as a spine connecting neighborhoods with a rich history as the epicenter of the African American community in Nashville, beginning with the Federal occupation of Nashville. The city's three Historically Black Colleges and Universities - Fisk University, Tennessee State University, and Meharry Medical College were all located in the neighborhoods around Jefferson Street by the 1930s, and some of the oldest black church congregations in Nashville flourished in the area. As an affluent, black middle-class supported businesses in North Nashville, the Golden Age of Jefferson Street from 1935-65 was born. The area became a tight-knit community with dance halls, theaters, and beer joints where blues, jazz, gospel, and R&B stars visited as they toured the nation. Muddy Waters, James Brown, Etta James, Ray Charles, Little Richard, B.B. King, and Jimi Hendrix had stints at clubs along Jefferson Street. Residents patronized their local businesses and gathered to socialize along thriving Jefferson Street.

Urban Renewal and the development of the Interstate system would impact the neighborhoods as families were relocated and venues were razed. Metro even targeted the nightlife on Jefferson Street for elimination because of gambling rooms in the back of clubs. The construction of Interstate 40 and Interstate 265 (now Interstate 65) in the 1960s displaced 1,400 North Nashvillians and isolated these historically significant neighborhoods and business areas. The final alignment chosen by TDOT for I-40 approaching Downtown Nashville was shifted into North Nashville from a more affluent, white neighborhood to the south. Sadly, the final alignment resulted in a greater displacement of residents, businesses, churches, and other community assets than would have occurred with the original routes proposed by consultants to the city of Nashville.

The routing of I-40 through North Nashville was not achieved without a fight. In 1967, a predominately black group of North Nashville community members joined together to challenge I-40 in court, arguing that a flawed public hearing



Figure 2: Diagram from a 1969 study showing the proposed air rights platform

process prevented North Nashvillians from knowing the full impact of the chosen route. The I-40 Steering Committee, as they called themselves, believed that the negative impacts would place an undue burden on Nashville's black community by displacing residents, shuttering businesses, and limiting access to schools and services. Although the community members were not successful in their court battle, some concessions were made to address concerns.

FHWA administrators offered air rights over I-40 for a future plaza with parking, shopping, and social gathering spaces. Final design details were to be determined in collaboration with community members as part of President Johnson's Model Cities program, but tensions between community members and

local government officials, as well as resident distrust of federal agencies in the wake of Urban Renewal and interstate highway bifurcation, led to an abandonment of the exploration of the air-rights platform. Nevertheless, the idea is still technically feasible and worthy of consideration today with fresh eyes as a strategy for reconnecting communities in North Nashville.

Today, Jefferson Street still has strong educational institutions with Fisk University and Meharry Medical College located on the corridor, and Tennessee State University at the terminus of the corridor and 28th Avenue. A strong business alliance through the Jefferson Street United Merchants Partnership (J.U.M.P.) was formed to advocate for the area’s stabilization and growth. The community secured funding to enhance the interstate overpasses, 28th Avenue interchange, and Jefferson Street through the Gateway to Heritage Project. The project, which includes a public plaza, honors the area’s history and improved the aesthetics of the overpass and interchange at 28th Avenue.



Figure 3: Phase 1 of the Gateway to Heritage

More work on pedestrian infrastructure is needed. Two additional bridges including the Jefferson Street bridge near the I-40/I-65 interchange and the D.B. Todd Boulevard bridge over I-40 do not reflect the area’s character. To many, they symbolize how disenfranchised communities were walled off from full participation in American society as minorities sought voting rights and equal protection under the law during the Civil Rights Movement. They are monuments to hasty infrastructure decisions that have contributed to the area’s decline. These bridges were built to move cars and are not welcoming to those walking and biking along the corridor, but with the vision of community members, they could become gateways and assets to reconnect the community.

Current Funding Status and Project Priority

Metro Planning and the North Nashville community recognize the need to improve connectivity to Jefferson Street. As part of the award-winning NashvilleNext General Plan, adopted in 2015, the city’s transportation plan, Access Nashville 2040 lists a significant walking project and biking project, which were originally part of The Gateway to Heritage Walking Improvements project. This project is identified as a North Nashville Community Priority¹:

Assess walking conditions across bridges that span I-40 along Jefferson Street at 12th Avenue North and I-

¹ Access Nashville 2040 identifies Countywide Critical Needs which are significant transportation projects that can improve access countywide, while Community Priorities are transportation projects important to a community plan area.

40 at D.B. Todd Boulevard, so they function as gateways linking the community, reducing vehicular speeds, and increasing safety for people walking.

A larger bikeway connection, identified as North Nashville Protected Bikeway, is highlighted as a Countywide Critical Need that should utilize the D.B. Todd Boulevard bridge:

Implement a protected bikeway along Clarksville Pike from Whites Creek Greenway, across the MLK Bridge, along D.B. Todd Boulevard over Jubilee Bridge to Jo Johnston Avenue.

No funding is currently obligated for the next phases of the Gateway to Heritage or the North Nashville Protected Bikeway. In early 2016, the Nashville Area MPO adopted its Regional Transportation Plan, Middle Tennessee Connected, which includes a significant investment in Nashville’s downtown interstate loop. It is part of the [Long-Term Horizon 2040](#) Projects:

RTP ID 9999 - Roadway Reconstruction - Downtown Nashville Interstate Loop Interchanges/Junctions Reconstruction



Figure 4: A partial cap over I-40 proposed in the Nashville Civic Design Center book *Shaping the Healthy Community*

It is envisioned that the loop will need to be optimized for future HOV or other managed lanes as the system continues to age. The interchanges will also need additional bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure to connect downtown to surrounding neighborhoods. Maintenance of the system will be critical to keeping commerce and people moving, but also offer an opportunity to improve how the highway system links communities and contributes to a sense of place.

Through the work of the Nashville Civic Design Center’s new publication “Shaping the Healthy Community” and the Metropolitan Nashville Planning Department’s NashvilleNext, Metro Nashville is ready to work with community members to further design these improvements with the assistance of U.S. DOT and pursue implementation funds.

Type of Project

The Gateway to Heritage Walking Improvements Project proposes small-scale highway treatments such as partial capping and pedestrian/bicycle overpasses or underpasses.

Project Location

The project area includes the Jefferson Street corridor that travels over I-40 near the I-65 interchange in North Nashville and the D.B. Todd Boulevard bridge over I-40. The interstates bifurcate the residential neighborhoods of Elizabeth Park, Fisk, and Meharry. The Jefferson Street commercial district was bridged for the construction of the

interstates. Commercial services for the area are primarily located along Jefferson Street. Residential neighborhoods flank the corridor and were directly impacted by the interstate construction.

Current Condition

The Jefferson Street bridge over I-40 (National Bridge ID: 19100400057) carries approximately 14,000 vehicles per day. It was built in 1967 and was last inspected in 2013. At that time it was rated to be in good condition, but narrow, cracked sidewalks and 24' wide travel lanes create a hostile pedestrian environment on this bridge. The D.B. Todd Boulevard Bridge over I-40 (National Bridge ID: 19100400053) carries approximately 10,000 vehicles per day and was also constructed in 1967. That bridge is considered to be functionally obsolete. It is a significant pinch point in one of North Nashville's primary bikeways as noted in the NashvilleNext project description.



Figure 5: Project locations identified in this map provided by the Nashville Civic Design Center

In 2015, the TDOT replaced eight I-40 bridges originally constructed between 1967-1969. Unlike those bridges, the Jefferson Street and D.B. Todd bridges are not yet structurally deficient. However, as this infrastructure ages it will be important to ensure a state of good repair, seek opportunities to reconnect bifurcated communities, and expand access to social and economic activities.

Impact of Infrastructure Challenge

The negative impacts of I-40 predicted by community members have been validated by numerous academic studies and local observations by professional planning staff in the years since I-40 was constructed through North Nashville. Concerted efforts by community organizations with support from local, state, and federal government officials, has helped to mitigate some of the impacts of the interstate highway, but significant barriers to economic development and community revitalization remain in the forms of aging, dilapidated infrastructure.

Nashville's participation in the design challenge will help create a vision for transportation infrastructure that serves as a point of pride rather than a point of shame. The design produced could be the groundwork for future applications for funding or local capital budget appropriations. The magnitude of impact will depend on the project scope selected by community members. A large-scale intervention like a partial cap could create new affordable office or retail space, supply shared parking, or support affordable housing for parcels made undevelopable because they were narrowed by the construction of the highway. A smaller-scale intervention could also have profound impacts. For example, community members may choose to design a "quick-build" project that results in immediate improvements to the walking and bicycling conditions on the existing bridge deck. Such an intervention could yield safety and placemaking

benefits, generating economic value for neighbors and bridge users. As part of the design session, participants will be asked to help identify measurable outcomes that could be used to calculate the net benefits of the proposed design.

Community Vision for the Design Session

Metro Nashville is fortunate to have a community already experienced with collaborative processes because of a long history of engaging with local communities in our city. The first phases of Gateway to Heritage, as an active partnership between J.U.M.P. and TDOT, was a true creative collaboration between public and private sectors to celebrate and revitalize North Nashville. This project was heavily driven by the local knowledge and local history of the Jefferson Street Community. The following process is proposed for initiating the design sessions, and we welcome U.S. DOT input in adapting the process as needed:

1. **Utilize well-established networks** within the Mayor's Office of Neighborhoods and Community Engagement, the Metro Nashville Planning Department, Fisk University, Meharry Medical College, the Oasis Center, J.U.M.P., and the Nashville Black Chamber of Commerce to publicize the design sessions. Additionally, Metro Planning will devote space on its website for the project to post meeting information, results, and gather additional feedback from the community. Social media through the Planning Department and Metro Government will also be utilized to highlight the upcoming meetings and discuss the sessions while they are underway.
2. **Gather input from residents and business owners** in the community through the design sessions.
3. **Host design sessions** with the assistance of USDOT facilitators as well as Metro Government officials in the Mayor's Office and Planning Department. These public design sessions should consist of an overview of the area's history, current challenges, site visit to explore and document additional issues with residents, and brainstorming of potential short-term and long-term, larger-scale improvements to create a place that the community can embrace.
4. **Synthesize ideas** among local and national professionals to provide a recommended strategy for short-term and long-term solutions for community feedback. Continue to tweak the strategies based on the feedback during the remainder of the design session. The strategies should also include steps for Metro to pursue in acquisition of implementation funds locally through the capital improvements budget, or through the Nashville Area MPO, TDOT, or U.S. DOT.
5. **Post the results of the design sessions** on-line and communicate the results to the stakeholder networks. Depending upon additional feedback after the design sessions, tweak the solutions.
6. **Pursue implementation funds.** The Mayor's Office, Planning Department, Nashville Area MPO, and TDOT will work together and with other stakeholders to identify potential funding opportunities and actively secure funds.

A similar framework was utilized in the Gateway to Heritage Project and proved to be successful at providing residents a sense of personal ownership and restored pride to historic Jefferson Street. We anticipate this process to have increased public input opportunities as a conversation with the community.

Appendix I – Letters of Support

Contents:

1. Mark Sturtevant, Director of Infrastructure, Office of the Mayor
2. Sharon W. Hurt, President/CEO, Jefferson Street United Merchants Partnership, Inc.
3. Dr. Phyllis D.K. Hildreth, Academic Director, Lipscomb University Institute for Conflict Management
4. Clint Genoble, Associate, EDGE Planning, Landscape Architecture & Urban Design
5. Gary Gaston, Executive Director, Nashville Civic Design Center
6. Nora Kern, Executive Director, Walk/Bike Nashville
7. Tanisha Hall, Director of Long Range Planning, Tennessee Department of Transportation
8. Michelle Lacewell, Deputy Director, Nashville Area Metropolitan Planning Organization
9. Doug Sloan, Executive Director, Metro Nashville/Davidson County Planning Commission
10. Steve Bland, Chief Executive Officer, Nashville MTA
11. Dr. Bill Paul, Director of Health, Metro Public Health Department

METROPOLITAN GOVERNMENT OF NASHVILLE AND DAVIDSON COUNTY



MEGAN BARRY
MAYOR

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
METROPOLITAN COURTHOUSE
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE 37201
PHONE: (615) 862-6000
EMAIL: mayor@nashville.gov

June 1, 2016

U.S. Department of Transportation
Attn: Stephanie Jones, Chief Opportunities Officer
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Ms. Jones,

On behalf of Nashville Mayor Megan Barry, the Mayor's Office of Infrastructure, Transportation & Sustainability respectfully submits this letter of support for Metro-Nashville's application to USDOT's Every Place Counts Design Challenge.

At the end of the Second World War, the Jefferson Street area became the central commercial hub for Nashville's African-American community, and was lined with stores, restaurants, barbershops. Jefferson Street nightclubs once hosted famous black musicians like Jimi Hendrix, Ray Charles, Tina Turner, and Etta James. This area of Nashville is also home to two nationally-renowned HBCUs, Fisk University and Meharry Medical College. Civil rights activists, including Dr. Martin Luther King Jr, drew inspiration from Nashville's Jefferson Street; national figures such as Wilma Rudolf have alumni ties to another nearby HBCU, Tennessee State University.

But after the construction of the Interstate loop around Downtown Nashville, the once-vibrant Jefferson Street drastically changed as the area was bifurcated by Interstate 40 in 1968. A tight-knit community—home to economic opportunities for Nashville's African-Americans—declined. There's overwhelming evidence to indicate the Interstate dealt a blow to the economic, social, cultural fabric of an historic black neighborhood; to Nashville's detriment, much of that transportation legacy lives on to this day.

The Tennessee Dept. of Transportation recently completed community-engagement work in partnership with Metro Government and a strong enclave of local businesses, the Jefferson United Merchants Partnership (J.U.M.P.), to enhance Interstate overpasses with the 'Gateway to Heritage' project. With its proximity to Downtown, the area is now experiencing tremendous market-driven pressures to update its look and feel as Nashville is in the spotlight as America's next "It City." Further, Jefferson Street and Dr. DB Todd Jr. Boulevard bridges over I-40 do not adequately reflect this area's rich and vibrant historical and cultural roots, nor are these safe, comfortable places for walking and biking.

Additional thought, attention, and investment *must* be given to this area; enhancing the existing Interstate bridges, or developing a total design-revamp capping the Interstate to effectively reconnect this community, could theoretically go a long way toward improving the health (human and environmental), livability, and prosperity, of this absolute gem of a community in Music City USA.

The Metropolitan Government of Nashville & Davidson County and its partners would be excited to explore and expound upon these concepts with the neighbors, churches, and businesses around Jefferson Street, as part of the Every Place Counts Design Challenge. We hope the USDOT will strongly consider bringing the Challenge to Nashville's historic Jefferson Street.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "M. Sturtevant".

Mark A. Sturtevant
Director of Infrastructure
Office of the Mayor, Megan Barry
Metropolitan Govt. of Nashville & Davidson Co.



J.U.M.P.

Jefferson Street United Merchants Partnership, Inc.

June 2, 2016

U. S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590
Attn: Stephanie Jones, Chief Opportunities Officer

Dear Ms. Jones:

I am President/CEO of JUMP-Jefferson Street United Merchants Partnership (hereinafter JUMP), a community service organization and CDC that houses a workforce development division, a merchants organization, a driver license restoral program, provides affordable housing, just to name a few. I am writing in support of a pending application for The Every Place Counts Design Challenge from Metro Nashville.

JUMP began as an organization founded to help revitalize businesses In North Nashville, and Jefferson Street in particular, with the goal of returning the community to the thriving economic mecca that it was prior to the devastation and division created by the interstate construction and integration. That being said, JUMP has a network of over 200 business in its membership, all of whom were supportive of the initial improvements created by the Gateway to Heritage project.

The Gateway to Heritage turned a blighted landscape underneath an interstate overpass into a beautiful, and educational, destination. A second phase of the project was to further enhance the Gateway to Heritage with additional signage, lighting, small scale treatments, and access. Currently, the surrounding areas, the bridge on D.B. Todd, and other areas on Jefferson Street are not amenable to walking and biking. Additional thought and financial backing need to be given to this area by enhancing the existing bridges or developing a design that will cap these areas, reconnect the community, make it comparable to the gentrified area just a few blocks away, and make all areas deserving of the Nashville's title "It City", as bestowed by the *New York Times*.

I, and JUMP, fully support Metro Nashville's request for this funding and, as always, are committed to assist in any way possible for this project to come to fruition.

We thank you for your time and consideration, and please feel free to contact us if you have any questions or need further information

Sincerely,

Sharon W. Hurt
President/CEO

1215 9th Avenue North - Suite 201
Nashville, Tennessee 37208

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June 1, 2016

U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590
Attn: Stephanie Jones, Chief Opportunities Officer

Dear Ms. Jones,

I am pleased to provide this letter of support for Metro Nashville's application to the Every Place Counts Design Challenge. My interest in this project is three-fold. Previously, I owned and operated a business on Jefferson Street. Now I teach conflict management in civic engagement, and also serve as a Vice Chair of the Metro Nashville Human Relations Commission.

The mission of the Metro Human Relations Commission is to protect and promote the personal dignity, peace, safety, security, health, and general welfare of all people in Nashville and Davidson County, and to ensure compliance with the provisions of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Thus, as one with strong civic ties to North Nashville institutions and commerce, I am keenly concerned to ensure that members of this community not be, in the words of the Act, *"denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance."*

Jefferson Street is a classic example of the negative impact transportation projects that focus only on vehicles can have on communities. Before Interstate 40 bisected our community, the first African American firehouse in the city (Engine No. 11) and a historic hotel stood on lots across the street from my former restaurant. Those lots, however, now stand empty and undeveloped as they have for years, perhaps since the interstate was completed. Although some improvements have been made through the Gateway to Heritage Project, the area still has a long way to go before it is on the same level as other neighborhoods in North Nashville, such as Germantown and the Bicentennial Mall area to the east of Rosa L. Parks Boulevard.

Jefferson Street connects a strong partnership of businesses, faith congregations, and historic institutions of higher education. Together, this partnership constitutes a unique civic space in which community planning and collaborative governance can thrive and produce wise, equitable and healthy social outcomes.

We hope you will consider bringing the Design Challenge to Nashville, and look forward to working with you and Metro Nashville community team.

Sincerely,



Phyllis D.K. Hildreth, J.D.
Academic Director
Associate Professor
Institute for Conflict Management
Phyllis.hildreth@lipscomb.edu



U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590
Attn: Stephanie Jones, Chief Opportunities Officer

Dear Ms. Jones,

We are providing this letter of support for Metro Nashville's application to the Every Place Counts Design Challenge. Jefferson Street was once a vibrant community that housed a noted rhythm and blues district, hotels, offices, and retail. Two universities (Tennessee State University and Fisk University) and Meharry Medical College are located within this area. The construction of Interstate 40 combined with desegregation effectively destroyed the fabric of the neighborhood, bisected Jefferson Street and cut off traffic to businesses. Citywide desegregation gave black customers shopping choices in other areas of town. The once vibrant area became a collection of businesses just holding on, boarded-up buildings, and cracking sidewalks.

EDGE had the opportunity to lead the Jefferson Street community through a public process that resulted in a design solution which responded to the surrounding neighborhood and created the framework for restoring pride to the historic Jefferson Street District. Heritage Plaza is the centerpiece of the enhancement. The public plaza celebrates African Americans that have influenced Nashville and the rest of the United States in the areas of civil rights, education, music, religion, and athletics. Custom interpretive signs wrap freeway columns within a plaza of weaving pavement patterns. The interpretive stories continue along Jefferson Street with solar powered sign columns.

The pedestrian connectivity system in this area is minimal. Because of this, the initial project also included street improvements along Jefferson Street, in addition to structural and aesthetic improvements to an existing Pedestrian bridge over Interstate 65. By implementing these enhancements, pedestrian connectivity in and around the Jefferson Street area would be improved. Unfortunately due to budget constraints and funding sources, these improvements were put on hold, to be performed at a later date.

We hope you will consider bringing the Design Challenge to Nashville, and look forward to working with you and Metro Nashville community team to extend the reach of the Gateway to Heritage Project. Nashville's "It City" status is putting increased development pressure on this area, which could cause another cycle of displacement of residents in the area. Inclusive community engagement is what is needed to make this historic area a place for all Nashvillians to enjoy.

Sincerely,



Clint Genoble
EDGE Planning, Landscape Architecture & Urban Design



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June 2, 2016

U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590
Attn: Stephanie Jones, Chief Opportunities Officer

Dear Ms. Jones,

I am writing in support of Metro Nashville's application to the Every Place Counts Design Challenge. The Nashville Civic Design Center (NCDC), a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the quality of life for all Nashvillians.

In 2004, NCDC released *The Plan of Nashville: Avenues to a Great City*, a vision plan that focused on the concept of reconnecting neighborhoods segmented by the construction of the interstate highway system. NCDC's recent book, *Shaping the Healthy Community: The Nashville Plan (SHCN)*, further endorses these much needed connections as key strategies for positively impacting Nashville's public health through built environment interventions.

The area specifically centered along Jefferson Street, a once vibrant historically African American community devastated by the construction of the interstate I-40 loop in the 1960s, is a focus of these concepts.

Jefferson Street has strong partnerships of businesses, community and faith groups ready for change. Work was recently completed by TDOT, with community engagement led by a local nonprofit, to enhance the interstate overpasses with beautiful gateway signage, lighting, historical markers and artwork. While this is a tremendous improvement to the previous condition, it is an isolated concept that needs to be extended along the full length of Jefferson Street – to further restore this once vibrant and active community, and help reconnect the neighborhoods that were segmented in the 1960s.

Throughout its 15-year history, NCDC has partnered closely with the Metro Nashville government to realize numerous plans and projects that incorporate public participation and citizen engagement to improve the quality of buildings and neighborhoods, resulting in safer, healthier communities. We hope you will consider bringing the Design Challenge to Nashville, and look forward to working with you and Metro Nashville community team.

Sincerely,

Gary Gaston
Executive Director



June 3, 2016

U.S. Department of Transportation
Attn: Stephanie Jones, Chief Opportunities Officer
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Ms. Jones,

We are providing this letter of support for Metro-Nashville's application to USDOT's Every Place Counts Design Challenge. Historically the Jefferson Street was the central commercial hub for Nashville's African-American community, and was lined with stores, restaurants, barbershops. Jefferson Street nightclubs once hosted famous black musicians like Jimi Hendrix, Ray Charles, Tina Turner, and Etta James. In addition this area was home to a vibrant African American intellectual and higher-education community, thanks to the presence of three nationally-renowned HBCUs, Fisk University, Meharry Medical College, and TSU.

But after the construction of the Interstate loop around Downtown Nashville, the once-vibrant Jefferson Street drastically changed as the area was cut in two by Interstate 40 in 1968. There's overwhelming evidence to indicate the Interstate dealt a blow to the economic, social, cultural fabric of an historic black neighborhood; to Nashville's detriment, much of that transportation legacy lives on to this day.

The Tennessee Dept. of Transportation recently completed community-engagement work in partnership with Metro Government and a strong enclave of local businesses, the Jefferson United Merchants Partnership (J.U.M.P.), to enhance Interstate overpasses with the 'Gateway to Heritage' project. With its proximity to Downtown, the area is now experiencing tremendous market-driven pressures to update its look and feel as Nashville is in the spotlight as America's next "It City."

Unfortunately, the Jefferson Street and Dr. DB Todd Jr. Boulevard bridges over I-40 still do not adequately reflect this area's rich and vibrant historical and cultural roots, nor are these safe and comfortable places for walking and biking.

Additional thought, attention, and investment *must* be given to this area. Enhancing or redoing the existing Interstate bridges, to effectively reconnect this community, would go a long way to protecting this historical neighborhood and providing safe and enjoyable biking and walking connections.



Walk Bike Nashville is dedicated to creating a more walkable, bikeable and livable city for all. We feel there is great potential for improved street designs to enhance and protect this important and vibrant neighborhood. We would be excited to participate in a conversation with the neighbors, churches, and businesses around Jefferson Street, as part of the Every Place Counts Design Challenge. We hope the USDOT will strongly consider bringing the Challenge to Nashville's historic Jefferson Street.

Sincerely,

Nora Kern
Executive Director
Walk Bike Nashville



**STATE OF TENNESSEE
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**

LONG RANGE PLANNING DIVISION
SUITE 900, JAMES K. POLK BUILDING
505 DEADERICK STREET
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE 37243-1402
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JOHN C. SCHROER
COMMISSIONER

BILL HASLAM
GOVERNOR

June 1, 2016

U.S. Department of Transportation
Attn: Stephanie Jones, Chief Opportunities Officer
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Ms. Jones,

We are providing this letter of support for Metro-Nashville's application to USDOT's Every Place Counts Design Challenge. At the end of the Second World War, the Jefferson Street area became the central commercial and education hub for Nashville's African-American community. As an activity center for the community, local businesses and churches hosted civil rights, musicians and athletes like Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Tina Turner, Ray Charles, Etta James and Wilma Rudolph. This area is also home to three nationally renowned HBCUs, Fisk University, Meharry University and Tennessee State University.

But after the construction of the Interstate loop around Downtown Nashville, the once vibrant Jefferson Street drastically changed as the area was bifurcated by Interstate 40 in 1968. Since then, the tight-knit community, home to economic opportunities for Nashville's African-Americans has declined. This tale of access for some communities at the detriment of others is one that can be repeated by many cities across the country.

The Tennessee Department of Transportation recently completed community engagement work, in partnership with Metro Nashville government and a local business organization, the Jefferson United Merchants Partnership (J.U.M.P.), to enhance Interstate overpasses with the 'Gateway to Heritage' project. Due to Nashville's increased national profile to "It City" status and the corridor's proximity to downtown, there is a desire by the community to reflect the area's rich cultural roots while improving safe, multimodal connections for residents.

Additional thought, attention, and investment *must* be given to this area; developing a collaborative approach with the community to enhance the area and reviewing interstate design to effectively reconnect this community, could theoretically go a long way toward improving the health (human and environmental), livability, and prosperity, of this absolute gem of a community in Music City USA.

The Metropolitan Government of Nashville & Davidson County and its partners are excited to explore and expound upon these concepts with the neighbors, churches, and businesses around Jefferson Street, as part of the Every Place Counts Design Challenge. We hope the USDOT will strongly consider bringing the Challenge to Nashville's historic Jefferson Street.

Sincerely,



Tanisha J. Hall, AICP
Director of Long Range Planning



NASHVILLE AREA

Metropolitan Planning Organization

June 3, 2016

Stephanie Jones, Chief Opportunities Officer
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Ms. Jones,

The Nashville Area MPO is pleased to offer this letter of support for Metro Nashville's application to the Every Place Counts Design Challenge. In 1968 the Jefferson Street corridor, a tight-knit community home to many African-Americans, was negatively impacted by the construction of Interstate 40. Since that time, locals along Jefferson Street have worked to forge strong business partnerships to enhance the livability and quality of life in the area, but the design challenges posed by Interstate 40 have held back improvements to this corridor.

Earlier this year the Nashville Area MPO adopted its 2040 regional transportation plan (RTP) and the goals of the Design Challenge align not only with local objectives, but also with the regional priorities of the RTP, which are to maintain a safe and reliable transportation system for people and goods, help local communities grow in a healthy and sustainable way, enhance economic competitiveness and to spend public funds wisely by ensuring a return on investment. The 2040 RTP identified nine priority projects of regional significance, of which the reconstruction and modernization of the U.S. Interstate loop in downtown Nashville is one. This reconstruction will directly affect the Jefferson Street corridor and outcomes from the design challenge will support future work to improve access and mobility throughout downtown and nearby neighborhoods.

Additionally, the Jefferson Street corridor has limited walking and biking facilities, which present both a barrier to mobility and safety. Careful design work needs to be dedicated to this corridor to enhance the existing bridges and develop a design that will cap these areas and reconnect the community.

We hope you will consider bringing the Design Challenge to Nashville, and look forward to working with you and the Metro Nashville community team.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "M. Lacewell".

Michelle Lacewell, APR
Deputy Director

CC Michael Briggs, Metro Nashville Planning Department
The Honorable Randall Hutto, MPO Executive Board Chairman
Mr. Doug Demosi, MPO Technical Coordinating Committee Chairman



**METROPOLITAN GOVERNMENT
OF NASHVILLE AND DAVIDSON COUNTY**
Planning Department
Metro Office Building, 2nd Floor
800 Second Avenue South
Nashville, Tennessee 37219

June 1, 2016

U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590
Attn: Stephanie Jones, Chief Opportunities Officer

Dear Ms. Jones,

The Metropolitan Nashville Planning Department is honored to offer its support to Nashville's *Every Place Counts Design Challenge* application for Jefferson Street. Planning staff has worked with the North Nashville community on planning efforts over the years, and we have developed strong working relationships with residents and business owners in these neighborhoods. Urban renewal and the construction of the interstate network through Nashville were detrimental to this thriving African American district. The challenges along Jefferson Street have somewhat stabilized with strong residential oversight and a business alliance, but new challenges face the area as Nashville changes and grows. We are excited to partner with U.S. DOT, businesses, and residents on this design effort to reconnect this neighborhood and honor its thriving past. We think you will agree that Jefferson Street is important to Nashville's history and African American culture, and it is also a significant neighborhood in shaping Music City's identity. The nation can celebrate its continued resurgence through this design process.

The Planning Department will provide a meeting location and transportation to conduct site visits and ensure information is publicized through our network of contacts and online. We will help bring additional community stakeholders to the table. Our staff will also be involved as part of the Community Team including Adams Carroll, Activity Mobility Planner; Michael Briggs, Transportation Planner; Stephanie McCullough, Community Planner and primary contact for the North Nashville Community Plan; and Jessica Buechler, Urban Designer. We plan to utilize additional professional planners and urban designers on staff to assist U.S. DOT in engaging the community for the design challenge.

We are excited about this opportunity, and we look forward to working with you. If you have questions about our department's role, please feel free to contact Adams Carroll, Active Mobility Planner (615.862.7174 or Adams.Carroll@nashville.gov) or Michael Briggs, Transportation Planner (615.862.7219 or Michael.Briggs@nashville.gov), within our office.

Sincerely,

Doug Sloan
Executive Director
Metro Nashville/Davidson County Planning Commission



June 2, 2016

www.nashvillemta.org

430 Myatt Drive
Nashville, TN 37115
615-862-5969
615-880-3945 Fax

U.S. Department of Transportation
Attn: Stephanie Jones, Chief Opportunities Officer
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Ms. Jones,

Megan Barry
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Patricia Harris-Morhead
Director of Communications &
Marketing

Eric Beyer
Director of Community &
Legislative Relations

We are providing this letter of support for Metro-Nashville's application to USDOT's Every Place Counts Design Challenge. At the end of the Second World War, the Jefferson Street area became the central commercial hub for Nashville's African-American community, and was lined with stores, restaurants, and barbershops. Jefferson Street nightclubs once hosted famous black musicians like Jimi Hendrix, Ray Charles, Tina Turner, and Etta James. This area of Nashville is also home to two nationally-renowned HBCUs, Fisk University, and Meharry Medical College. Civil rights activists, including Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., drew inspiration from Nashville's Jefferson Street; national figures such as Wilma Rudolph have alumni ties to another nearby HBCU, Tennessee State University.

However, after the construction of the interstate loop around Downtown Nashville, the once-vibrant Jefferson Street drastically changed as the area was bifurcated by Interstate 40 in 1968. A tight-knit community – home to economic opportunities for Nashville's African-Americans – declined. There's overwhelming evidence to indicate the interstate dealt a blow to the economic, social, and cultural fabric of an historic black neighborhood; to Nashville's detriment, much of that transportation legacy lives on to this day.

The Tennessee Department of Transportation recently completed community-engagement work in partnership with a strong partnership of local businesses, the Jefferson United Merchants Partnership (J.U.M.P.), to help enhance interstate overpasses with the 'Gateway to Heritage' project. With its proximity to Downtown Nashville, the area is now experiencing tremendous market-driven pressures to update its look and feel, as Nashville is in the national spotlight as America's next "It City." Further, Jefferson Street and Dr. DB Todd Jr. Boulevard bridges over I-40 do not adequately reflect this area's rich and vibrant historical and cultural roots, nor are these safe and comfortable places for walking and biking.

Additional thought, attention, and investment must be given to this area; enhancing the existing interstate bridges, or developing a total design-revamp capping the interstate to effectively reconnect this community, could

Ms. Stephanie Jones

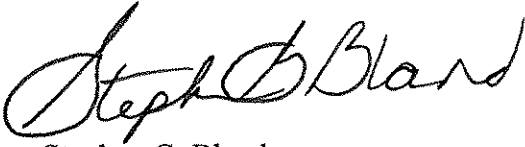
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theoretically go a long way toward improving the health (human and environmental), livability, and prosperity, of this absolute gem of a community in Music City USA.

The Metropolitan Government of Nashville & Davidson County and its partners would be excited to explore and expound upon these concepts with the neighbors, churches, and businesses around Jefferson Street, as part of the Every Place Counts Design Challenge. We hope the USDOT will strongly consider bringing the Challenge to Nashville's historic Jefferson Street.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephen G. Bland". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "S".

Stephen G. Bland
Chief Executive Officer



Metro Public Health Dept

Nashville / Davidson County

Protecting, Improving, and Sustaining Health

Megan Barry, Mayor

William S. Paul, MD, MPH, FACP
Director of Health

Board of Health

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Thomas W. Campbell, MD
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Francisca Guzmán
Margreete G. Johnston, MD, MPH

June 2, 2016

U.S. Department of Transportation

Attn: Stephanie Jones, Chief Opportunities Officer

1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE

Washington, DC 20590

Dear Ms. Jones,

I am pleased to write a letter in support of the Metro Planning Department's application to USDOT's Every Place Counts Design Challenge to improve the Jefferson Street Corridor in North Nashville. This initiative can advance health equity in this historically African American neighborhood that faces numerous economic and social challenges.

The Metro Public Health Department (MPHD) has a long standing relationship collaborating with Metro Planning Department. Most recently, we collaborated on the development of Nashville's general plan, NashvilleNext. Health equity and maximizing the built environment are key priorities for MPHD. The proposed initiative provides an opportunity to improve one of Nashville's most disenfranchised areas to help achieve optimal health of North Nashville residents.

The MPHD is excited to support Nashville's efforts to engage the neighbors, churches, and businesses around Jefferson Street, as part of the Every Place Counts Design Challenge. We hope the USDOT will strongly consider bringing the Challenge to Nashville's historic Jefferson Street.

Sincerely,

William S. Paul, MD, MPH, FACP
Director of Health