

# U.S. Department of Environmental Protection (EPA)

## Climate Pollution Reduction Grants Program: Implementation Grants General Competition

### *Harnessing Transportation Alternatives to Decarbonize Travel Across Greater Philadelphia:*

#### Letters of Support

- United States Senator John Fetterman
- Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission
- Global Thinking Initiatives Inc.



City of  
**Philadelphia**

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024

Honorable Michael S. Regan  
Administrator  
United States Environmental Protection Agency  
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Administrator Regan,

I write in support of the application submitted by the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA) and the City of Philadelphia for EPA's Climate Pollution Reduction Grant (CPRG) program. SEPTA and the City seek this funding to advance infrastructure and assistance programs designed to reduce transportation-related greenhouse gas emissions in the greater Philadelphia region.

Together, the projects are intended to make transit (via SEPTA's Regional Rail) more efficient and reliable, and to build out existing bike programs, which will help induce a transition from personal vehicles to more affordable and sustainable alternatives. SEPTA plans on accomplishing this goal through two interventions: replacing some of the Silverliner IV railcars and separating the Manayunk/Norristown Line in Norristown and the Airport Line in Philadelphia from freight operations. The over 50-year-old Silverliner IV railcars make up over two-thirds of SEPTA's entire Regional Rail fleet and are a serious barrier to creating a viable alternative to individual automobile commuting. These changes will allow for significant ridership growth, reduced headways to every 15-20 minutes, and provide a modern, reliable Regional Rail system.

Additionally, the City's three projects – expansion of the Indego Bike Share program, an e-Bike rebate program, and EV charger installation – will deliver immediate enhancements to zero-emission mobility platforms that have a demonstrated and effective track record. Taken together, these projects will increase the use of lower-emission transportation modes, reducing car dependence while also making these alternative services more affordable and reliable – particularly for low-income and disadvantaged communities.

I'm confident that SEPTA and the City of Philadelphia's request will help implement needed efficient and reliable transit options that also protect human health and the environment. I urge you to give the application full and fair consideration. Feel free to contact my office (202) 224-4254 if you have any questions, comments, or concerns. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'J' followed by a series of loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

John Fetterman  
United States Senator

March 28, 2024

Leslie S. Richards  
General Manager and CEO  
Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority  
1234 Market Street, 10th Floor  
Philadelphia, PA 19107

SUBJECT: US EPA Climate Pollution Reduction Grants– Decarbonizing Travel Across Greater Philadelphia

Dear Ms. Richards,

The Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) is pleased to support the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA) and the City of Philadelphia's joint application for funding through the US Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Climate Pollution Reduction Grants (CPRG) Program for the Decarbonizing Travel Across Greater Philadelphia program described below. As the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the bi-state, nine county Greater Philadelphia Region, DVRPC works with stakeholders to approve and advance federal transportation infrastructure investment that supports the vision laid out in our Long-Range Plan, *Connections 2050*, for an equitable, resilient, and sustainable region.

Together, SEPTA and the City intend to advance a program of infrastructure and assistance programs designed to reduce transportation-related greenhouse gas emissions in the greater Philadelphia region. DVRPC, in collaboration with the Wilmington Area Planning Council (WILMAPCO) and South Jersey Transportation Organization (SJTPO), has led the development of the Priority Climate Action Plan (PCAP) for the Philadelphia Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). As a major transit operator in the DVRPC region in Pennsylvania, SEPTA is a focus group participant in our MSA's CPRG planning efforts, and the projects SEPTA and the City of Philadelphia are proposing are consistent with the near-term measures identified in our MSA's PCAP.

This funding request supports two major SEPTA initiatives and three mobility projects for the City of Philadelphia. Specifically, funding would allow SEPTA to make significant investments in priorities conceptualized under its Reimagining Regional Rail Master Plan: 1) separating from freight operations on the Manayunk/Norristown Line in Norristown, Montgomery County, and on the Airport Line in Philadelphia, and 2) funding a portion of the replacement of the current Silverliner IV railcars, which comprise two-thirds of SEPTA's entire Regional Rail fleet and were purchased more than 50 years ago. Commuter-freight interactions create significant operational impacts not just on the two lines but throughout the Regional Rail Network. Separating operations would unlock the potential for significant ridership growth associated with providing high-frequency service of trains every 15-20 minutes on these lines. Similarly, a modern and reliable Regional Rail system demands new railcars and new facilities to properly maintain and

March 28, 2024  
Leslie Richards  
Page 2 of 2

store the new cars. The City's three projects – expansion of the Indego Bike Share program, an e-Bike rebate program, and EV charger installation – will deliver immediate enhancements to alternate, zero-emission mobility platforms that have a demonstrated and effective track record. Taken together, these projects will reduce carbon emissions in both the short- and long-term by increasing the use of lower emission transportation modes, reducing car dependence, and making alternative transportation services more affordable and reliable, particularly for low-income and disadvantaged communities.

The transportation sector is one of the largest contributors of greenhouse gas emissions. Rail transit and biking are inherently sustainable and proven alternatives to personal vehicles. Air quality in a dense metropolitan region like the Delaware Valley is a persistent and growing challenge, especially in the City of Philadelphia where urban heat islands and poor air quality are serious concerns for residents in disadvantaged and underserved communities. Inducing users of the region's transportation network to migrate to more sustainable transportation modes will provide significant environmental benefits.

SEPTA and the City of Philadelphia's proposed joint program is consistent with the goals of the CPRG Program and the vision of the *Connections 2050* Long-Range Plan. Should this project be selected for the EPA's CPRG Program, DVRPC will work with local stakeholders to amend the TIP and Long-Range Plan, as required. It has been a continual challenge to secure adequate funding for all the transportation needs and projects in our region. SEPTA and the City of Philadelphia, as project sponsors, will be responsible for identifying the supplemental funding needed to ensure that this program is fully funded for implementation in a reasonable period of time, and will coordinate with state and local agencies, as appropriate.

Sincerely,



Ariella Maron  
Executive Director

AM: ef

March 25, 2024

The Honorable Michael S. Regan  
Administrator  
Environmental Protection Agency  
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Administrator Regan:

Global Thinking initiatives is pleased to support the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA) and City of Philadelphia's joint application for funding through the US Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Climate Pollution Reduction Grants (CPRG) Program. Together, SEPTA and the City intend to advance a program of infrastructure and assistance programs designed to reduce transportation-related greenhouse gas emissions in the greater Philadelphia region.

The CPRG Program would support two major SEPTA initiatives and three mobility projects for the City of Philadelphia. Specifically, funding would allow SEPTA to make significant investments in priorities conceptualized under its Reimagining Regional Rail Master Plan: 1) separating from freight operations on the Manayunk/Norristown Line in Norristown, Montgomery County and on the Airport Line in Philadelphia, and 2) funding a portion of the replacement of the current Silverliner IV railcars, which comprise two-thirds of SEPTA's entire Regional Rail fleet and were purchased more than 50 years ago. Commuter-freight interactions create significant operational impacts not just on the two lines but throughout the Regional Rail Network. Separating operations would unlock the potential for significant ridership growth associated with providing high-frequency service of trains every 15-20 minutes on these lines. Similarly, a modern and reliable Regional Rail system demands new railcars and new facilities to properly maintain and store the new cars.

The City's three projects – expansion of the Indego Bike Share program, an e-Bike rebate program, and EV charger installation – will deliver immediate enhancements to alternate, zero-emission mobility platforms that have a demonstrated and effective track record. Taken together, these projects will increase the use of lower emission transportation modes, reducing car dependence while also making these alternative services more affordable and reliable – particularly for low-income and disadvantaged communities.

The transportation sector is one of the largest contributors of greenhouse gas emissions. Regional Rail and rail transit and biking are inherently sustainable and proven alternatives to personal vehicles. Air quality in a dense metropolitan region like the Delaware Valley MPO is a persistent and growing challenge – especially in the City of Philadelphia where heat deserts and poor air quality are serious concerns for residents in disadvantaged and underserved communities. Inducing users of the region's transportation network to migrate to more sustainable transportation modes will provide significant environmental benefits.

SEPTA is the nation's sixth largest transit agency and the largest in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Southeastern Pennsylvania depends on SEPTA service to efficiently move people, reduce congestion, and support sustainability goals. SEPTA was a focus group participant in the development of the Priority Climate Action Plan (PCAP) for the Philadelphia Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), and the program of projects that the Authority and City of Philadelphia are proposing are consistent with the near-term activities identified in the Climate Action Plan and will make more sustainable modes of transportation more efficient, affordable and attractive to travelers.

The Climate Pollution Reduction Grants Program was established in the Inflation Reduction Act to help communities and regions develop and implement plans for reducing GHG emissions and other harmful air pollution. SEPTA's project is aligned with those goals, and we respectfully request your full and fair consideration of their application.

Sincerely,

**Elaine Wells**

Elaine wells, Founder  
Global Thinking Initiatives Inc.