



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Community-Led Vision and \$2 Million Federal Grant Drives Philadelphia's Plan to Reconnect Neighborhoods Through Richmond Industrial Track Development**

PHILADELPHIA—Eastern North Philadelphia neighborhood leaders and the City of Philadelphia are coordinating on a plan to resolve decades of infrastructure challenges surrounding the Richmond Industrial Track, a freight rail line owned by Consolidated Rail Corporation (Conrail) dividing the Fairhill and Kensington neighborhoods. Efforts to accomplish this will be powered by a \$2 million federal Reconnecting Communities Pilot Program grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation.

The program received more than 400 applications and was able to award grants to 81 projects across the country.

"This grant award is a positive step toward better connecting our communities in North Philadelphia with safe, clean and green infrastructure that can allow for better mobility and access to anchor institutions like small businesses and greenspaces," said Mike Carroll, Deputy Managing Director, Transportation and Infrastructure at the City of Philadelphia. "The goal is to study how to best provide a safe biking and walking route for all ages and abilities in a historically underserved part of our city."

A community advisory committee, led by the Hispanic Alliance of Contractors and Enterprises (HACE), will guide a community-driven planning process with the City of Philadelphia, emphasizing collaboration and inclusivity.

With strong community support and 12 prior civic planning efforts at its foundation, the planning initiative is part of a broader vision to reimagine the freight rail corridor as a vibrant, accessible space that strengthens Philadelphia's economy, improves public safety and supports city-wide connectivity.

"The Richmond Industrial Track is currently a physical barrier limiting both social connections and economic growth for these communities, said Maria Gonzalez, President of HACE. "We now have an incredible opportunity to turn this challenge into an asset that is led by and supports the interests of the community."

Recent neighborhood revitalization efforts have underscored the importance of partnering with community-based organizations including HACE, Impact Services, and New Kensington Community Development Corporation (NKCDC), who not only address physical infrastructure but also the pressing social and economic needs of the neighborhood. These efforts have been vital in addressing systemic issues caused by industrial decline and have prompted the community to imagine a new future for their neighborhood. HACE and their partner organizations began collaborating in 2018 with neighborhood residents and other advocates, including Rails to Trails Conservancy (RTC) and the Bicycle Coalition of Greater Philadelphia, to develop a broad vision for the Track's revitalization, including connections to the larger Circuit Trails Network, a vast regional network of hundreds of miles of multi-use trails.

"This is a once in a generation opportunity to plan for and develop essential infrastructure that will create connections to the trail systems of greater Philadelphia," said RTC's Senior Director of Trail Development & Equity, Rev. Kate Foster. "We look forward to continuing our work with community partners in Fairhill and Kensington to ensure the project is resident-driven."

The Bridging the Gap: Equity and Access for all in Fairhill and Kensington project contributes to a nationwide effort to develop active transportation networks that improve connectivity and elevate quality of life. Across the United States, more than 150 of these networks are currently underway, with at least one in every state, bringing half of all Americans into communities where these transformative systems are taking shape. Federal programs like Reconnecting Communities play a vital role in supporting these initiatives, offering the essential funding required to realize their economic, mobility, and safety benefits. The demand for these grants highlights a need for sustained funding sources.

"As a business and major presence in the area, Conrail understands the importance of this project to the neighborhoods it will impact. We proudly support efforts to better the area that surrounds our infrastructure within Philadelphia and look forward to assisting the City with the development of this plan," says Daniel Dwyer, Conrail's General Counsel.

When complete, the study will tie together existing programs and new initiatives into a framework that advances equitable infrastructure investments in the area. Project planning will include an analysis of opportunities for incorporating additional community-supported initiatives such as the development of greenspaces, public art, and enhancements to recreational spaces, ensuring that improvements reflect the unique cultural identities of the community.

#### About HACE

Since 1982, HACE builds just and equitable neighborhoods for residents and small businesses of Eastern North Philadelphia. They build neighborhoods of choice by developing affordable housing and commercial spaces, providing supportive services, engaging residents and

stakeholders, and supporting small businesses to grow the neighborhood's economic base and increase job opportunities to nurture the community's rich cultural diversity.

#### About Rails to Trails Conservancy

Rails to Trails Conservancy is the nation's largest trails organization—with a grassroots community more than 1 million strong—dedicated to building a nation connected by trails, reimagining public spaces to create safe ways for everyone to walk, bike and be active outdoors. Connect with RTC at [railstotrails.org](http://railstotrails.org) and [@railstotrails](https://www.instagram.com/railstotrails) on social media.