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Congress of the United States
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GLOBAL HUMAN RIGHTS, AND
INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

February 19, 2016

Carlos Machado
Division Administrator
US Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration
Rhode Island Division Office
380 Westminster Street, Suite 547
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Administrator Machado:

I am writing today on the subject of the Blackstone Visitor Center adjacent to the Interstate 295 Safety Rest Area. This establishment will be an integral component of the newly established Blackstone River Valley National Historical Park and serves as a welcoming gateway to the park for visitors. As such, I am disappointed in the Administration's ongoing efforts to close the commercial establishment known as "The Outpost" located within the Visitor Center. I believe that The Outpost has the appropriate prior authorization from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), as well as Congressional authorization, to remain open and operational. Further, FHWA was directly involved in the necessary land transfer, development, and construction of this facility and as such would seem to be foreclosed from vacating earlier agreements between the Administration and the State of Rhode Island that authorize the operations of the Visitor Center.

As you know, The Outpost was opened in July, 2015 by Michael LaFond, a Cumberland resident and constituent. Mr. LaFond, a firefighter, sells concessions and Rhode Island souvenirs to customers visiting the park. Prior to The Outpost opening, Dunkin' Donuts occupied the same space for six years without disapproval from the FHWA. However, FHWA has indicated that they have now concluded The Outpost specifically is operating outside of federal regulations and should not be open.

The Carl Levin and Howard P. "Buck" McKeon National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2015 (Public Law 113-291), which created the Blackstone River Valley National Historical

Park, included a Congressional mandate stating the plan “shall consider ways to use preexisting or planned visitor facilities and recreational opportunities developed in the National Heritage Corridor, including [...] the Route 295 Visitor Center adjacent to Blackstone River State Park.” I believe this Congressional directive extends to The Outpost in keeping with utilization of preexisting visitor facilities located within the park.

I thank you for your attention to this matter and look forward to an amicable resolution. If I may be of any further assistance in finding such a resolution, within all rules and regulations, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "David N. Cicilline". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "D" and a prominent dot over the "i" in "Cicilline".

David N. Cicilline
Member of Congress