



**CORNELL R. ROBERTSON, P.E., P.S.**  
**FRANKLIN COUNTY ENGINEER**

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March 10, 2021

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg  
Secretary of Transportation  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue S.E.  
Washington, D.C. 20590

Re: Support for the Columbus Crossroads INFRA Application in Franklin County, Ohio

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

As the County Engineer of Ohio's most populous county, with a large urban community combined with a significant rural presence, I am writing to express my support and to reinforce the strong regional support for the joint City of Columbus and Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) INFRA grant application for Phase 4 of the Columbus Crossroads project. Working closely with ODOT, the City of Columbus, and others on our roadway infrastructure priorities, I believe the key aspects that make the Columbus Crossroads project so important are the following:

- Columbus Crossroads is a community-led \$1.3 billion, multi-phase project to transform the crossroads of Interstates 70 and 71 and to improve one of the key corridors of the National Primary Highway Freight System. These changes will remove a major bottleneck for interstate commerce on these two important commercial arterials, and the improvement brings strong local, rural, and state support. Phase 4 of the Project, which costs approximately \$230 million, is essential for increasing safety, reducing congestion, and enhancing access to essential services, to more than 100,000 jobs, and to farming produced in the region.
- Phase 4 of this project focuses on the physical overlap of I-70 and I-71, two major interstate routes in the Midwest serving commuter traffic from across the state and freight traffic from across the nation. The overlap carries 130,000 vehicles per day – including 17,100 commercial vehicles – and exceeds its design capacity by 50,000 vehicles. Essentially this project's economic impact exceeds by far its local footprint.
- The overlap's trench also creates a physical barrier between Downtown Columbus and neighborhoods south of the overlap. While this major investment will replace obsolete highway infrastructure, Columbus Crossroads will also restore connections, and revitalize surrounding neighborhoods. Before I-71 was built in the 1960s, the King-Lincoln District bustled with 63,000 people and was the center of culture and commerce. By 2000, the neighborhood had dwindled to 16,000 residents, with one in 5 being out of work, and nearly half living in poverty. Phase 1 of the Columbus Crossroads project restored the connection to the King-Lincoln District with the Long Street Bridge and Cultural Wall, which were featured on the cover of the FY2017 USDOT Budget. Then Secretary Anthony Foxx wrote, "This effort to reconnect and revitalize a community divided by past transportation policies is a compelling example of how transportation can create or eliminate opportunity gaps in our Nation." Phase 4's bridge and surface street components continue this tradition, as the sub-phase is focused on restoring connections across the interstate to Southside neighborhoods as well as improving the built environment surrounding the project area.

Completion of the Columbus Crossroads project has been identified as a top priority for the City of Columbus, Franklin County, the Central Ohio region, and the State of Ohio. Because of the importance of these improvements to the prosperity of our region, our state, and to the resiliency of the national interstate highway system, I respectfully request that the U.S. Department of Transportation approve this funding application. Please contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Cornell R. Robertson, P.E., P.S.  
Franklin County Engineer

c: Ohio Governor Mike DeWine  
Ohio Department of Transportation Director Jack Marchbanks, PhD