

March 18, 2021

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

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

I am writing today to express the Columbus Partnership's strong support for the joint City of Columbus and Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) INFRA grant application for Phase 4 of the Columbus Crossroads project.

The Columbus Partnership is a non-profit, membership-based leadership organization of 80 chairpersons, chief executive officers and senior executives from the Region's leading businesses and institutions. Our members include Fortune 500 CEOs, as well as the leaders of top universities and the world's largest private, nonprofit research and development organization. One Columbus serves as the regional economic development leader for the 11-county Central Ohio region. We represent over 255 private companies and more than 30 local governments, non-profits, and institutions that are focused on strengthening and growing the economy and providing opportunities for all.

Columbus Crossroads is a community-led, \$1.3 billion multi-phase project to transform the crossroads of Interstates 70 and 71. The project improves one of the key corridors of the National Primary Highway Freight System while simultaneously leveraging this infrastructure investment to help restore and reconnect communities that were adversely impacted by redlining and the construction of I-70 and I-71.

Phase 4 is a \$230 million sub-phase that focuses on the freeway mainline in the physical overlap of I-70 and I-71, the surface streets surrounding it and the bridges spanning it. The freeway mainline in the overlap serves 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. As a result, this area contains three of Ohio's top 10 freeway crash locations. The overlap's trench also creates a physical barrier between Downtown Columbus and the neighborhoods south of the overlap, adversely impacting economic development in these areas.

The Ohio Department of Transportation, the City of Columbus, the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC), and a diverse group of community stakeholders and business entities have collaborated over the last decade to develop and implement a comprehensive vision of prosperity for citizens of our Region. Before I-71 was built in the 1960s, the King-Lincoln District bustled with 63,000 people and was the center of culture, commerce, civic life and church in the African American community.

By 2000, the neighborhood had dwindled down to just 16,000 residents, only 21 percent of the people in this area owned their homes. In 2014, Phase 1 of the Columbus Crossroads project restored the connection to the King-Lincoln District with the Long Street Bridge and Cultural Wall – one of the most revered pieces of infrastructure in all of the City. In 2016, USDOT believed that the Columbus Crossroads Project was of such national significance that the Long Street Bridge and Cultural Wall were featured on the cover of the FY2017 USDOT Budget. Then Secretary Anthony Foxx wrote, "This

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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 focus on restoring connections across the interstate to Southside neighborhoods and improving the built environment surrounding the project area. This phase will include planting new street trees throughout the project area, supporting new EV charging stations along the NHS, constructing a cap on both sides of the High Street bridge and the Third Street bridge and adding improved bicycle and pedestrian facilities to the Fourth Street bridge. The City of Columbus and ODOT also plan on extensively engaging the community and providing locations within the project limits for meaningful public art. Furthermore, Phase 4 complements the \$28 million the City of Columbus is investing in Livingston Avenue to build complete streets, improve safety and provide better access to both Southside neighborhoods and Nationwide Children’s Hospital, one of the top children’s health facilities in the nation.

We respectfully request that the U.S. Department of Transportation consider this important investment opportunity in our community. Thank you for your consideration of the application.

Very truly yours,



Alex R. Fischer  
President and CEO  
Columbus Partnership



Kenny McDonald  
President and CEO  
One Columbus

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