

March 12, 2021

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

Secretary Buttigieg:

On behalf of the Human Service Chamber of Franklin County, a nonprofit chamber of commerce serving 110 health and human services nonprofits in the Columbus Region, I am writing to express my 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.

I had the honor of meeting you twice in 2017--first, when you were campaigning for DNC Chair; and second, at the Arena Summit in Charlotte, when you sat down with my friend Dan McCready to offer counsel and advice prior to his run for Congress. I was supremely impressed then with your care for community and equity, and am therefore personally and professionally grateful you are in the critical leadership role as our Transportation Secretary.

Columbus Crossroads is a community-led \$1.3 billion project to transform the crossroads of Interstates 70 and 71 in the heart of America's 14th-largest city. The project improves one of the key corridors of the National Primary Highway Freight System; while at the same time leveraging this infrastructure investment to help restore and reconnect communities that were adversely impacted, first by redlining and second by constructing I-70 and I-71. Tragically and consistent with so many other cities, the people whose communities were bisected were predominantly Black. While we cannot undo what has been done, we can take active steps to eliminate or minimize the negative consequences by improving infrastructure and eliminating barriers.

That's what this project may achieve. The existing infrastructure creates a trench that is a physical barrier between Downtown Columbus and the neighborhoods south of the overlap. While this major investment will replace obsolete highway infrastructure, Columbus Crossroads will also restore connections, build ladders of opportunity, transform communities, and revitalize Downtown and surrounding neighborhoods. We can and must do better; this project would help us do so.

Respectfully submitted,



Michael Corey
Executive Director
Human Service Chamber of Franklin County