

March 6, 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

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

On behalf of MurphyEpson, I am writing this letter to express our 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.

Our firm led the community engagement for the reconstruction of I-71/I-670 and facilitated the community process that led to the selection of artists and design of the Long Street Cultural Wall. This effort, along with the walkable, bikeable design of the bridge and park-like cap over the freeway, reunited two neighborhoods that were torn apart when I-71 was built in the nineteen sixties.

Today, you will find families gathering at the Cultural Wall, which highlights the churches, musicians and artists who once made the community thrive. It also spotlights young artists and leaders who are bringing the community together now. It is a point of community pride and even a national example of using public investments to restore equity instead of ripping it apart. Private investment is now returning to the area.

In 2016, USDOT believed that the Columbus Crossroads Project was of such national significance that the Long Street Bridge and Cultural Wall was 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."

We have the opportunity to do that again with the fourth phase of the Columbus Crossroads. The barren, concrete bridges so reflective of our redlined past will be replaced with bridges that enhance Southside Columbus neighborhoods instead of further separate them. The "Complete Streets" bridge design will make it safe and easy for families to walk and ride their bikes to their destinations. This is both a healthy choice and a critical step in restoring a sense of community. This is the hard work it takes to build safe, attractive cities for all.

At the same time, this \$240 million investment will untangle one of the most congested knots of freeways in Ohio, which contains three of Ohio's top ten freeway crash locations. This is of national importance because I-70 is one of the main freight corridors in the U.S. As a leader in the logistics industry, Ohio shippers - and customers across the nation -- count on this transportation network to deliver goods reliability and predictably.

We respectfully request that the U.S. Department of Transportation consider the importance of these improvements to the restoration of our communities, the prosperity of our region and state, and the resiliency of the national interstate highway system; and we urge your consideration of the application.

Sincerely,



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