

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

**Re: Support for the Columbus Crossroads INFRA Application**

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

I am writing this letter to express my strong 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.

I have been a community activist in the South Side of Columbus for over 29 years, working on a variety of community beautification and economic development projects. The Interstates that slice through Columbus have separated many neighborhoods from downtown, split neighborhoods, and have made pedestrian and vehicular traffic difficult and unsafe. Meanwhile, traffic has grown well beyond the capacity of these Interstates.

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 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. Current and future phases of work, including Phase 4, from this multi-phase project are now integrated within ODOT's Downtown Ramp Up construction project.

Phase 4's bridge and surface street components focus on restoring connections across the interstate to South Side neighborhoods as well as 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 and ODOT will also do extensive engagement and provide locations within the project limits for public art that are meaningful to the community. These improvements are a once-in-a-generation opportunity, they will make our South Side neighborhoods safer and more efficient for bicycles and pedestrians, as well as more attractive and welcoming, helping a damaged area to reconnect with downtown, and spurring healthy and sustainable development throughout the area.** Furthermore, Phase 4 complements the \$28 million the City is investing in Livingston Avenue to build complete streets, improve safety, and provide better access to both South Side

neighborhoods and Nationwide Children's Hospital, which is one of the top children's health facilities in the nation.

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,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Bob Leighty". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Bob" and the last name "Leighty" clearly distinguishable.

Bob Leighty  
Community Activist