



BRAD FOSTER, P.E., P.S.
FRANKLIN COUNTY ENGINEER

May 22, 2024

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 City of Columbus' Request for CRISI Funding for the Hilliard & Rome Road Grade Separation Project

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

As the County Engineer for Franklin County Ohio, I am writing this letter to express my support for the City of Columbus' Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) application for the Hilliard & Rome Road Grade Separation Project. The requested CRISI funding (approximately \$26.6 million) will allow the City of Columbus to separate a hazardous at-grade railroad crossing on Hilliard & Rome Road, improve transportation insecurity in two census tracts, and extend the impact and benefit of federal and local rapid transit investments.

The at-grade crossing (513244C) on Hilliard & Rome Road sees, on average, approximately 26,575 motor vehicles and 19 trains per day. It is currently ranked 384 out of 5,600+ at-grade crossings statewide. The Federal Rail Administration has received numerous reports of stopped trains blocking this intersection for extended periods, pedestrians have been observed climbing on, over, or through train cars, and emergency responders have been unable to cross.

Additionally, there are two census tracts in the project area that are identified as disadvantaged and having high transportation insecurity by USDOT's Justice40 Rail Explorer. This project will connect residents and others to the LinkUS West Broad Street Bus Rapid Transit Corridor. My office is committed to Vision Zero whose mission is to eliminate traffic fatalities and serious injuries by providing safe mobility for all.

The Ohio Rail Development Commission has already awarded this project \$3.3 million from Ohio's Rail Crossing Elimination Program. A CRISI award will continue the momentum to replace this hazardous at-grade crossing that lacks pedestrian or bicycle facilities with a separated crossing that includes pedestrian and bicycle facilities. I respectfully request you consider the challenges of this crossing, along with the potential this project has to positively improve safety for all road users and urge your approval of the City of Columbus' application.

Sincerely,

Brad Foster, P.E., P.S.
Franklin County Engineer