



COLUMBUS CROSSROADS

Phase 4 INFRA Application | March 19, 2021



Financial Commitment

A joint letter from the City of Columbus, the Ohio Department of Transportation, and the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission is enclosed, which confirms their funding commitment towards the Columbus Crossroads Phase 4.

March 10, 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:

We are writing to express our strong support for this application, which is seeking a \$45 million INFRA grant for Phase 4 of the Columbus Crossroads project. Columbus Crossroads is a community-led \$1.3 billion, multi-phase project to transform, reconnect and mitigate the great divide that Interstates 70 and 71 created in the heart of the City of Columbus during the early days of the interstate system.. 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. The Ohio Department of Transportation, the City of Columbus, and the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission are committed to providing the funding necessary to complete Phase 4. An INFRA grant would allow Phase 4 to be completed in a significantly more efficient manner than if this additional federal funding was not received.

Planning for the Columbus Crossroads project began in 2001, and construction is still ongoing. ODOT, the City of Columbus, the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC), and a diverse group of community stakeholders and business entities have collaborated to develop and implement this comprehensive vision. This vision has already yielded significant fruit, especially in the Columbus Crossroad's East Corridor. 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, one in 5 were out of work, and nearly half lived in poverty. 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 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.”

Presently, current and future phases of work from this multi-phase project – including Phase 4 – are now

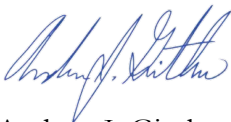
integrated within ODOT's Downtown Ramp Up construction project. Phase 4 itself is focused on the freeway mainline in the physical overlap of I-70 and I-71; as well as the surface streets surrounding it, and the bridges spanning it. The freeway mainline in the overlap serves commuter traffic from across 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 ten freeway crash locations. The overlap's trench also creates a physical barrier between Downtown Columbus and the neighborhoods south of the overlap. Phase 4 will not only replace obsolete highway infrastructure, but it will also continue Long Street Bridge and Cultural Wall tradition of restoring connections, building ladders of opportunity, transforming communities, and revitalizing Downtown Columbus and surrounding neighborhoods.

Phase 4 is focused on restoring connections across the interstate to Southside 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. 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 Southside neighborhoods and Nationwide Children's Hospital, which is one of the top children's health facilities in the nation.

The total future eligible costs for Phase 4 are currently estimated to be \$247.2 million. If the INFRA grant is received, the remaining costs will be shared by ODOT (\$175,000,000), the City of Columbus (\$23,200,000), and MORPC (\$4,000,000). By signing this letter, we not only express our strong support for this transformational project, but also our firm financial commitment to it. We commit that our organizations have or will have their share of the future eligible projects costs. MORPC's share of the project costs will be provided to ODOT, who is managing the project, upon ODOT's request; and the City of Columbus' share of the project costs will be provided to ODOT upon ODOT's request and final authorization from the Columbus City Council.

We respectfully request that the U.S. Department of Transportation consider the importance of these improvements to the prosperity of our region and state, the significance of the recent gas tax increase, and the widespread support for this application; and we respectfully urge your support for the application.

Sincerely,



Andrew J. Ginther,
Mayor
City of Columbus



William Murdock, AICP
Executive Director
Mid-Ohio Regional Planning
Commission



Jack Marchbanks, Ph.D.
Director
Ohio Department of
Transportation