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February 20, 2020

The Honorable Elaine L. Chao
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 Chao:

On behalf of One Columbus, the regional economic development organization representing the 11-county Columbus Region, I am writing this letter to express our strong support and to reinforce the strong regional support for the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) INFRA grant application for Phase 4 of the Columbus Crossroads project; and to urge your thoughtful consideration of this catalytic project of national, regional, and community importance.

As we work together to realize our shared vision of becoming the most prosperous Region in the United States, One Columbus provides the economic development leadership, strategy, and execution needed to sustain and grow a vibrant region. In order to continue the momentum and growth occurring in the Columbus Region, it's critical that we continue to invest in infrastructure that will better and more safely connect our communities, companies, and interstate commerce.

Columbus Crossroads is a community-led \$1.3 billion, multi-phase project to transform the crossroads of Interstates 70 and 71 and improve one of the key corridors of the National Primary Highway Freight System. These changes not only remove a major bottleneck for interstate commerce on these two important commercial arteries, but the ongoing effort to improve the connection also brings strong local and state support. Phase 4 of the project, which costs approximately \$265 million, is essential for

improving safety for commuters and pedestrians; reducing congestion; and enhancing access to essential services and more than 100,000 jobs in the Region.


Phase 4 of this project focuses on the physical overlap of I-70 and I-71. 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. Leveraging this major investment to replace obsolete highway infrastructure, Columbus Crossroads will also reconnect, restore, and revitalize Downtown Columbus and surrounding neighborhoods. ODOT, the City of Columbus, the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC), and a diverse group of community stakeholders and business entities have collaborated over the last decade to develop and implement this comprehensive vision.

Earlier iterations of this project were submitted to the Department for consideration and we are grateful for the feedback and consideration received. Since the last application to the INFRA process, the community has advanced this project with state dollars. Last year, the state passed a transportation budget that generates more revenue through higher gas user fees and increased registration fees for local governments and electric vehicles. As a result, significant funding was dedicated for that work; however, this project cannot be completed without leveraging additional funding from the INFRA program.

Completion of the Columbus Crossroads project has been identified as a top priority for the City of Columbus, the Columbus Region, and the State of Ohio. Importantly, it resolves major safety, congestion, and capacity issues for the two major interstates in the state.

We respectfully request that the U.S. Department of Transportation consider the importance of these improvements to 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,



KENNY McDONALD, CEcD
President and Chief Economic Officer
One Columbus