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Office of the President
David M. McMullen

Ohio Auto Club
90 E. Wilson Bridge Rd.
Worthington, OH 44308
Tel 614-431-7857
Fax 614-433-0710
AAA.com

February 14, 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:

I write this letter on behalf of AAA Ohio Auto Club, which represents nearly 760,000 members, to (1) 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 (2) to urge your thoughtful consideration of this catalytic project of national, regional, and community importance.

For more than a century AAA has worked to improve the quality and safety of the nation's roadways. AAA members rely each and every day on our roads, bridges and transit systems. When these systems deteriorate, or can no longer accommodate the current traffic volume, it not only frustrates our members, but it imposes a real cost on them in terms of safety, time and vehicle maintenance. The completed Columbus Crossroads project would help improve aging infrastructure, reduce congestion and improve safety for motorists.

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, the ongoing effort to improve the connection 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.

Last year, the state passed a transportation budget that generates more revenue through higher motor fuel user fees and increased registration fees for local governments and electric vehicles. As a result, the state was able to dedicate significant funding for the Columbus Crossroads project. 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 Central Ohio region, and the State of Ohio. 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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dave McMullen'.

Dave McMullen
President and CEO
AAA Ohio Auto Club

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