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February 19, 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 the Ohio Hotel & Lodging Association and its member businesses, I am writing this letter to add our strong endorsement to the large amount of 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.

Ohio's travel economy is growing, and infrastructure will be critical to continued growth, new jobs and economic prosperity. Columbus Crossroads is a \$1.3 billion, multi-phase project to transform the crossroads of Interstates 70 and 71 in Downtown Columbus, improving commerce and freight movement across Ohio and the Midwest. The region is quickly growing and becoming one of the premier destinations in the country for business, events, conventions, and leisure travel. This multi-billion dollar travel economy is providing new jobs and opportunities for hundreds of thousands of employees in our sector.

Phase 4 of the Project, which costs approximately \$265 million, is essential for improving safety for commuters and pedestrians; reducing congestion; enhancing access to essential services and more than 100,000 jobs in the region; and attracting and retaining visitors and events.

We wish to express our industry's deep support -- and to reinforce the strong support in communities throughout our region -- for the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) and City of Columbus joint INFRA grant application for Phase 4 of the Columbus Crossroads project. We urge your support for this catalytic project of regional and national importance.

Phase 4 focuses on the physical overlap of I-70 and I-71, which 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 also creates a physical barrier between Downtown and neighborhoods to the south. Columbus Crossroads will reconnect, restore, and revitalize Downtown 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.

Completion of the Columbus Crossroads project is a top priority at the city, regional and state level. Last year, our organization supported the passage of a state 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 is being dedicated to this project; however, it cannot be completed without leveraging additional funding from the INFRA grants program. We respectfully urge your support for the application.

Sincerely,



**Joe Savarise**  
Executive Director