



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

May 23, 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 the Hilliard Rome Road Grade Separation Project CRISI Application

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

I am writing to express my commitment and support for the City of Columbus' Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) application for the Hilliard Rome Road Grade Separation Project. My administration is committed to building a safe, equitable transportation system that addresses long term poverty and uplifts disadvantaged communities; and this project is an opportunity to further that commitment into real projects. This project is seeking approximately \$30.6 million to separate a hazardous at-grade railroad crossing on Hilliard Rome Road, improve transportation insecurity in two disadvantaged census tracts, and extend the impact and benefit of federal and local investments in the LinkUS West Broad Street Bus Rapid Transit (CRT) corridor.

The at-grade crossing (513244C) on Hilliard Rome Road is one of the busier and more hazardous at-grade crossings in Ohio. This crossing sees an average of approximately 26,575 motor vehicles and 19 trains per day; and its hazard ranking is currently ranked 384th out of more than 5,600 at-grade crossings statewide. The Federal Rail Administration has received multiple reports of stopped trains blocking the crossing for extended periods of time since 2022. Pedestrians have been observed climbing on, over, or through the train cars during multiple reported incidents; and emergency responders have been observed unable to cross the tracks during one of the reported incidents. Separating the existing crossing and providing dedicated pedestrian and bicycle facilities will significantly improve safety at the crossing and through the entire corridor.

This is particularly important as two of the census tracts in the project area are identified as disadvantaged and having high transportation insecurity by USDOT's Justice40 Rail Explorer: 39049008165 & 39049008171. The project will help connect these residents and others to the LinkUS West Broad Street Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Corridor, which is less than a mile south of the at-grade crossing on Hilliard Rome Road. USDOT recently awarded a Neighborhood Access and Equity Capital Construction grant to the Central Ohio Transit Authority for the BRT's construction; and the Hilliard Rome Road grade separation project will further extend the federal

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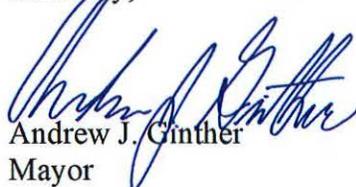
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and local investments in the West Broad BRT Corridor by making it easier and safer to cross the railroad tracks and access the BRT.

The total future eligible costs for the Hilliard Rome Road Grade Separation Project are currently estimated to be \$38.3 million. If the CRISI grant is received, the non-federal costs will be shared by the Ohio Rail Development Commission (\$3,329,924) and the City of Columbus (\$4,326,759). By signing this letter, I not only express my strong support for this transformational project, but also Columbus' firm financial commitment to it. I commit that Columbus will have its share of the future eligible project costs. The City of Columbus' local match will be provided as needed and upon final authorization from the Columbus City Council, which has authorized Columbus to apply for this funding.

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 a hazardous at-grade crossing that lacks pedestrian or bicycle facilities with a separated crossing that includes pedestrian and bicycle facilities. We respectfully request that the U.S. Department of Transportation consider the transportation challenges created by the current crossing, and the need to separate it.

Sincerely,



Andrew J. Ginther
Mayor

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