

February 28, 2019

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:

The Columbus Region Coalition (CRC) is a group of local governments, members of the business community, and other community stakeholders that make up the diverse interests of the Columbus Region. As the collective voice of our region, we urge you to support the Columbus Crossroads INFRA application.

Columbus Crossroads is a \$1.3 billion, multi-phase project to transform the crossroads of Interstates 70 and 71 in Downtown Columbus and improve freight movement across Ohio and Midwest. We write this letter to (1) express our strong support for the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) and City of Columbus joint INFRA grant application for Phase 4 of the Columbus Crossroads project; and (2) to urge your support for this catalytic project of national and regional importance.

Decades ago the neighborhood immediately north of downtown, the Short North, was cut off by I-670. Pedestrians would avoid traveling from downtown to this underutilized commercial stripe except by car. With visionary leadership from public and private sectors, Columbus came together to cap the highway, including infrastructure for commercial development. Today, the Short North is the most popular visitor destination in Columbus, contributing to Central Ohio's population and economic growth. The improvements for S. High Street and S. Third Street could provide the same catalytic energy south of downtown that the N. High-670 cap created decades ago.

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. However, this project cannot be completed without leveraging additional funding from the INFRA grants program. 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 respectfully urge your support for the application.

Sincerely,



Shannon G. Hardin
Columbus Council President



**SHANNON G. HARDIN, PRESIDENT | ELIZABETH C. BROWN | MITCHELL J. BROWN
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CITY CLERK | ANDREA BLEVINS, CMC