

May 15, 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:

Founded in 1884, the Columbus Chamber of Commerce is the leading voice of business within the 11-county Columbus region, with nearly 2,000 members employing over 500,000 workers. A focus of the Chamber's government relations efforts centers on Transportation and Infrastructure, advocating for a fully integrated and advanced multi-modal transportation network to facilitate and advance the growth and sustainability of the region's logistics, manufacturing, and related industries. The Columbus Region Logistics Council (CRLC), an initiative of the Columbus Chamber, includes a diverse group of 120 companies that span the supply chain and logistics industries.

The Columbus Chamber and CRLC are pleased to submit this letter of support for the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) and City of Columbus joint INFRA grant application for Phase 4 of the Columbus Crossroads project. 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. This investment is of great important to Chamber members, employees, and the business community at large. With the region expecting to grow by more than 1 million residents by 2050, safety and reliability of transportation to jobs is a top workforce priority. In order to increase safety and maintain the region's competitiveness by relieving traffic congestion and adding capacity, we urge your support for this catalytic project of national and regional importance.

Leveraging this major investment to replace obsolete highway infrastructure, Columbus Crossroads also seeks to 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.

Phase 4 focuses on the physical overlap of I-70 and I-71. The overlap serves commuter traffic from across Central Ohio, and it serves freight from across the Midwest and the nation. The overlap carries 130,000 vehicles per day – including 17,100 commercial vehicles – and exceeds its design capacity by 50,000 vehicles per day. The overlap's trench creates a physical barrier between Downtown Columbus and the neighborhoods south of the overlap. Phase 4, which costs approximately \$200 million, is essential for improving safety and reducing congestion for commuters and pedestrians; improving access to essential services and more than 100,000 jobs in Downtown Columbus; and reconnecting the southern neighborhoods.

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. The state recently passed a transportation budget that generates more revenue through higher motor vehicle user fees and increased registration fees for local governments and electric vehicles. However, the project cannot be completed without leveraging additional funding from the INFRA grants program.

For the aforementioned reasons, 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 urge your support for the application.

Sincerely,



Don DePerro
President & CEO

cc: Mr. Dan DeBono, Chief Infrastructure Funding Officer, U.S. Department of Transportation
Central Ohio Congressional Delegation