



May 10, 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

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Dear Secretary Chao:

Columbus Landmarks is a dedicated group advocating for the preservation of historic architecture, adaptive reuse of old buildings, and new design excellence throughout Greater Columbus. Our organization was founded as a result of the loss of urban fabric and historic architecture from the 1950's through the 1970's.

One of the projects that exacerbated this loss of fabric was the construction of Interstates 70 and 71 through the heart of Downtown Columbus. While this project significantly expanded resident mobility and the movement of freight, it also impacted the economic and social vitality of Downtown and the surrounding neighborhoods. Columbus is still working to repair these issues and will be for decades to come.

The Columbus Crossroads project has already demonstrated its ability to directly address and improve the impacts of the original I-70/71 project. This major investment will replace obsolete highway infrastructure while simultaneously reconnecting, restoring, and revitalizing 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.

As evidence of the success and community support for this project, the Long Street Bridge and Cultural Wall, a portion of Phase 1 of the Columbus Crossroads project, has been widely embraced as a successful effort to link Downtown and the historic King-Lincoln Bronzeville neighborhood. The project has been a finalist for Columbus Landmark's James B. Recchie Design Award, demonstrating its design quality and community significance.

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. The overlap carries 130,000 vehicles per day – including 17,100 commercial vehicles – and exceeds its design capacity by 50,000 vehicles. The overlap's trench creates a physical barrier between Downtown Columbus and the historic 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. Columbus Landmark's Executive Leadership, Board of Trustees, and 1000+ members strongly support this critical project. We are dedicated to furthering this effort through our advocacy and public education mechanisms.

Sincerely,

Becky West
Executive Director, Columbus Landmarks

Matthew Leasure
Advocacy Committee Chair, Columbus Landmarks

cc: Mr. Dan DeBono, Chief Infrastructure Funding Officer, U.S. Department of Transportation,
1200 New Jersey Avenue S.E. Washington, D.C. 20590

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