



OHIO HOTEL & LODGING ASSOCIATION
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May 1, 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:

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. We wish to express our industry's deep support -- and to reinforce the strong support 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.

Leveraging this major investment to replace obsolete highway infrastructure, Columbus Crossroads will 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 exhibited true leadership and effectiveness in collaborating over the last decade to develop and implement this comprehensive vision.

Phase 4 focuses on the physical overlap of I-70/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 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 to 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. Our organization supported the state's recently-enacted transportation budget that generates more revenue through higher gas user fees and increased registration fees for local governments and electric vehicles. However, this project cannot be completed without leveraging additional funding from the INFRA grants program. We request that the U.S. Department of Transportation consider the importance of these improvements to the economy of our region and state, and the resiliency of the national interstate highway system. We respectfully urge your support for the application.

Sincerely,


Joe Savarise
Executive Director


Deidra Marshall
Board President


Alan Assaf
Government Affairs Chair

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