



April 8, 2022

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
Secretary of Transportation
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue S.E.
Washington, D.C. 20590

Re: Support and Financial Commitment for the Williams Road Multimodal Corridor Planning Project RAISE Application

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

We are writing to express our strong support for this application, which is seeking a \$7 million RAISE planning grant for the Williams Road Multimodal Corridor Planning Project. This project is seeking to use the RAISE planning grant to develop a consistent corridor concept plan for the entire 6.5 mile Williams Road corridor, from the road's western terminus near the Scioto River, to its eastern terminus at State Route 317 (Hamilton Road).

Williams Road supports projected household and employment growth within the larger Columbus south side region and Rickenbacker Airport and Global Logistics Park, including Foreign Trade Zone 138. MORPC identified the need for improving the Williams Road corridor as part of its 2018 Rickenbacker Area Study, due to the projected population and employment growth along the corridor. It is an important east-west roadway connection, and it is identified on the Central Ohio Greenway's Trail Vision Plan as a future corridor for a significant bikeway and pedestrian connection on Columbus' south side. The current roadway is heavily travelled by residents and freight, yet it is only two lanes and lacks any bicycle or pedestrian facilities. This has contributed to multiple traffic fatalities and serious injuries. Significant improvements are required to ensure the roadway can safely and equitably support the corridor's projected growth and freight.

However, the large scale of the corridor and its required significant multi-jurisdictional, multi-use, and multi-modal improvements are far too difficult for any single, local jurisdiction to implement on its own. The project area involves the coordination of three cities (Columbus, Obetz, and Groveport), two townships (Hamilton and Madison), Franklin County, the Columbus and Franklin County Metro Parks, and numerous stakeholders. The corridor serves a wide variety of land uses, including regional parkland, residential, commercial, logistics, and two rail yards (CSX and Norfolk Southern). The corridor's two at-grade crossings and one separated crossing have a significant impact on traffic moving through the corridor. There are utility challenges, the majority of the corridor lacks bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and the existing roadway and intersections are inadequate to safely support the variety of users who currently use the corridor (personal and commercial vehicles) or want to use the corridor (bicyclists and pedestrians). Addressing these challenges will significantly improve freight and transportation opportunities along a corridor that includes opportunity zones, areas of persistent poverty, and a historically disadvantaged census tract.

The total future eligible costs for the Williams Road Multimodal Corridor Planning Project are currently estimated to be \$9,190,000. If a \$7,000,000 RAISE planning grant is received, the remaining \$2,190,000 will be shared by the City of Columbus (\$1,890,000) and the Franklin County Engineer (\$300,000). By signing this letter, we not only express our strong support for this transformational project, but also our firm financial commitment to it. We commit that our organizations have or will have their share of the future eligible project costs. The City of Columbus' share of the project costs will be provided as needed and upon final authorization from the Columbus City Council; and the Franklin County Engineer's share of the project costs will be provided as needed and upon final authorization from the Franklin County Board of Commissioners.

A RAISE planning grant is necessary to help create a unified concept for this very complicated corridor that is in such great need of safety, mobility, congestion, and capacity improvements. We respectfully request that the U.S. Department of Transportation consider the challenges of the corridor, the need to create more transportation opportunities within it, and the potential this project has to positively impact our community. We urge your consideration of the application.

Sincerely,



Andrew J. Ginther
Mayor
City of Columbus



Cornell R. Robertson, P.E., P.S.
County Engineer
Franklin County