



MID-OHIO REGIONAL
MORPC
PLANNING COMMISSION

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February 27, 2023

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

Re: Support for the Heath-Thornwood Drive Corridor Planning RAISE Application

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

On behalf of the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission, I am writing to express our strong support for and to reinforce the regional commitment to the Heath-Thornwood Drive Corridor Planning RAISE Application. This project is seeking to use the RAISE planning grant to strategically create a multimodal freight corridor for the 2.7-mile-long section of Thornwood Drive, from the Central Ohio Rail Crossing at its north to the Ridgely Tract Road extension at its south.

As a regional council serving the greater Central Ohio area, including Licking County, MORPC (also the Metropolitan Planning Organization, or MPO, for the Columbus area), works closely with the Licking County Area Transportation Study (LCATS), which is the designated MPO for the balance of Licking County not covered by the MORPC MPO. Due to the overlap in geography and planning functions, MORPC and LCATS have always worked closely and collaboratively, especially to advance shared regional priorities like the Thornwood Drive Corridor.

The Thornwood Drive corridor is an important north-south roadway in the quickly growing Central Ohio region. The RAISE application supports corridor planning activities as the City of Heath pursues multimodal solutions to support the expected growth of both residential and commercial developments. There are plans that support the development of over 600 homes along Thornwood Drive, along with 800 acres of recently industrially zoned land throughout the corridor. The geographic location of this road makes it the preferred route to access other developments throughout Licking County, such as Intel's new semiconductor facility in the emerging New Albany Business Park. As economic development continues, Thornwood Drive will need to serve a much higher capacity than it is currently capable of. The RAISE application will enable multimodal planning that reflects the needs of residents, workforce, and businesses along the corridor, as well as freight traveling through the corridor.

The current conditions of Thornwood Drive are in bad repair and will not support the forecasted traffic demands, as it is two lanes and provides limited shoulder access throughout its entirety. Additionally, the Central Ohio Rail Crossing at its northern extent creates delays and presents a safety challenge for all users in

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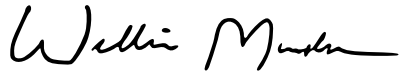
The Honorable Peter Buttigieg

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the corridor. Sustainable and equitable planning must be applied to this corridor to ensure this infrastructure can support the traffic patterns it serves and will serve in the near future.

The Thornwood Drive Corridor will serve a plethora of planned developments not only adjacent to this road, but throughout Licking County. It will foster multiple modes of transportation that balance all the needs presented from residential and commercial developments. The city is a distinct community with unique transportation challenges. A RAISE planning grant is necessary to study avenues that address safety, mobility, and transportation infrastructure for this quickly growing part of the Central Ohio region. We respectfully request that the U.S. Department of Transportation consider the challenges of Thornwood Drive, the need to improve transportation opportunities within it, and the potential this project has to positively impact the communities of Heath and the greater central Ohio region.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "William Murdock". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

William Murdock, AICP

Executive Director, Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission

