



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

February 23, 2023

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:

I am writing to express the City of Columbus' strong support and financial commitment for this application, which is seeking a \$7 million RAISE planning grant for the Williams Road Multimodal Corridor Planning Project. This project – designated a Project of Merit during the FY 2022 RAISE Round – 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 at the newly announced Great Southern Metro Park on 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 that will ultimately include connection to two regional metro parks and three regional trails. 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. 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 historically disadvantaged census tracts.

The total future eligible costs for the Williams Road Multimodal Corridor Planning Project are currently estimated to be \$9,190,000. The City of Columbus understands that if a \$7,000,000 RAISE planning grant is received, the City of Columbus will be responsible for providing the \$2,190,000 local match. By signing this letter, I not only express my strong support for this transformational project, but also Columbus' firm financial commitment to it. I commit that Columbus will have its share of the future eligible project costs. The City of Columbus' local match will be provided as needed and upon final authorization from the Columbus City Council. The Columbus City Council authorized Columbus to apply for this funding knowing federal funds can only provide up to 80% of the total project costs, and that local funding will also be required.

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. I 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. I urge your consideration of the application.

Sincerely,



Andrew J. Ginther,
Mayor

