January 2, 2026

David Fink, Administrator of the Federal Railroad Administration
US Dept of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, D.C. 20590

RE: Heartland Rail Connectivity Initiative – Federal State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail (FSP) Program Application

Administrator Fink,

I am writing on behalf of All Aboard Ohio in support of the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC), the Franklin County Convention Facilities Authority (FCCFA), and their project partners as applicants for the Federal State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail Program (FSP) grant application. The grant application named, "Heartland Rail Connectivity Initiative," will strengthen the passenger rail network in Ohio and throughout Midwest, revitalize the smaller Midwestern communities, promote economic development and make the transportation network safer and more reliable for all residents. The Heartland Rail Connectivity Initiative is requesting $6,000,000 in federal funds to analyze the existing utility easements and non-freight corridor right-of-way, conduct the market analysis, and perform grade separation safety studies for future passenger rail corridors. The Project would also conduct a feasibility study for passenger rail service to the John Glenn International Airport and begin preliminary engineering on a proposed rail station at the Greater Columbus Convention Center to serve future passenger rail service.

The proposed **Heartland Rail Connectivity Initiative** would build upon previous and ongoing passenger rail development efforts in the Midwest while facilitating the implementation of passenger rail service in Central Ohio. The **Heartland Rail Connectivity Initiative** would supplement the development of the Midwest Connect and 3C+D passenger rail corridors, which are two new passenger rail corridors in Step 2 of the Corridor ID program. Central Ohio is the fastest growing region in the Midwest and will be home to more than 3 million residents by 2050. This growth is supported by major economic development projects, including more than $30 billion invested by Intel, Anduril, and Honda.

The **Heartland Rail Connectivity Initiative** aims to build upon federal, state and local efforts to revitalize Ohio's urban and rural communities by development of new long-distance and regional passenger rail connections to key economic opportunities while furthering efforts to create a multimodal transit hub in Downtown Columbus. All Aboard Ohio is in full support of

these efforts to develop new passenger rail service to connect key Ohio destinations and believes that this project represents a commitment and necessary investment in safety, corridor preservation, and economic prosperity. Thank you for your consideration of this important application.

Sincerely,

John Esterly, Executive Director
Ohio Association of Rail Passengers dba All Aboard Ohio