Ohio's 7th House District
Columbus | Grandview Hts. | Upper Arlington

77 S. High Street, Columbus, OH 43215
rep07@ohiohouse.gov
(614)466-8012

Office of Representative C. Allison Russo
State Representative
The Ohio House of Representatives

February 3, 2026

David Fink
Administrator
Federal Railroad Administration
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, 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 to express my strong support of the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC) and its partners as applicants for the Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail (FSP) Program. As the fastest growing metropolitan area in the Midwest, Columbus outpaced the national average growth rate by 38%. However, it remains to be the largest region in the U.S. without passenger rail service despite its sustained growth.

The project would advance two critical corridors currently in Step 2 of the Federal Railroad Administration's Corridor Identification and Development Program: Midwest Connect (Chicago–Fort Wayne–Columbus–Pittsburgh) and 3C+D (Cleveland–Columbus–Dayton–Cincinnati). MORPC and its partners are seeking funding for a $6 million planning initiative for design of a proposed passenger rail station at the Greater Columbus Convention Center; analysis of non-freight corridors for future passenger and private rail service; safety reviews of rail crossings near the Columbus station; evaluation of rail-oriented development to support ridership and station operations; and development of a clear governance framework for future service.

As a public-private partnership, the Heartland Rail Connectivity Initiative represents a mindful and market-driven approach to restore modern passenger rail service to Central Ohio and strengthen connections throughout the broader Midwest. By aligning federal resources with private-sector participation, this initiative seeks to maximize return on investment by promoting workforce development and supporting long-term economic competitiveness, while delivering meaningful mobility benefits to communities across the urban-rural spectrum.

This effort also reflects broad, bipartisan recognition of the value of passenger rail in Ohio. Members of the Central Ohio congressional delegation, including U.S. Representatives Mike Carey and Joyce Beatty, have previously voiced their support for passenger rail initiatives in this region. Former Senator J.D. Vance has also supported Federal Railroad Administration Corridor Identification and Development Program applications for the 3C+D and Midwest Connect corridors. This shared support underscores a consensus that modern passenger rail is essential to Ohio's future transportation network.

Ohio's residents and businesses increasingly demand transportation options that are reliable, safe, and competitive with those available in other growing regions. With proven passenger rail models operating successfully across the county, and with Central Ohio's strong ridership potential, this initiative represents a prudent and timely investment of federal resources.

Thank you for giving your full and fair consideration to the FSP application for the Heartland Rail Connectivity Initiative and for your continued commitment to advance safety, expand mobility, and lay the foundation for long-term economic growth in Ohio.

Sincerely,



C. Allison Russo
State Representative
7th House District