State Rep. Munira Abdullahi (s*he/her*)
Ohio House District 09 – N Columbus, Westerville, Gahanna & New Albany

Administrator Fink,

I write in strong support of the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission and its partners in their application to the Federal State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail Program. Central Ohio is the fastest growing region in the Midwest and remains the largest region in the nation without passenger rail service, having lacked intercity rail since 1979 despite sustained population and economic growth.

The Heartland Rail Connectivity Initiative is a practical, market-oriented effort to restore modern passenger rail service to Central Ohio and the broader Midwest through a public private partnership that leverages federal investment to attract private capital, support job creation, and strengthen long term economic competitiveness while improving mobility and reliability across rural, suburban, and urban communities.

Safety is central to this effort. The freight derailment in East Palestine highlighted the need for thoughtful corridor planning and risk reduction, and this initiative advances safety through corridor planning, safety reviews, and efforts to reduce conflicts between passenger and freight rail, particularly near stations and populated areas.

The project advances two corridors currently in Step Two of the Federal Railroad Administration's Corridor Identification and Development Program: Midwest Connect linking Chicago, Fort Wayne, Columbus, and Pittsburgh, and the 3C+D Corridor connecting Cleveland, Columbus, Dayton, and Cincinnati. MORPC and its partners seek funding for a six million dollar planning effort to move these corridors toward implementation, including early design work for a proposed passenger rail station at the Greater Columbus Convention Center, analysis of non-freight corridors for future passenger service, safety reviews of rail crossings near the Columbus station, evaluation of rail oriented development to support ridership, and development of a governance framework for future service
.
This effort builds on bipartisan engagement, with members of the Central Ohio congressional delegation and prior support from statewide leaders recognizing the importance of strategic passenger rail investment to Ohio's long-term mobility and economic growth.

Ohioans deserve reliable transportation options for business travel and family connections, and now is the right time to advance a safety focused and fiscally responsible approach that delivers value for taxpayers. Thank you for your consideration. I strongly support this application and believe the Heartland Rail Connectivity Initiative represents a smart investment in safety, mobility, and long-term economic growth.

Sincerely,

Munira Abdullahi
State Representative, Ohio House District 09

Committees & Boards:
Development
General Government
Workforce & Higher Education
Ohio Democratic Women's Caucus
Ohio Legislative Black Caucus

www.ohiohouse.gov
77 South High Street, Floor 10
Columbus, OH 43215-6111

Office: (614) 466-2473
Fax: (614) 466-2473
Email: Rep09@ohiohouse.gov