



OHIO DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
Mike DeWine, Governor Jack Marchbanks, Ph.D., Director

1980 W. Broad Street, Columbus, OH 43223
614-466-7170
transportation.ohio.gov

September 27, 2023

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
Secretary, US Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE
Washington, D.C. 20590

Subject: City of Cincinnati's Reconnecting Communities Pilot and Neighborhood Access and Equity Application

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

In the early 2000s, the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) was an active partner with local government leaders in Cincinnati to rebuild Fort Washington Way, investing state resources alongside local and private funds to rebuild the interstate and invest in foundations that would one day support decks that could reconnect Cincinnati and its riverfront.

This is a complicated project, but one that has long been contemplated in the Cincinnati region. ODOT has a primary focus on safety of our roadway network, and we remain engaged with the local partners on issues related to signage, structural design, and tunnel life safety engineering in the proposed tunnel that this project could create. Because of the strong partnership between our agency and the applicants, we are confident that technical issues will be addressed in the design phase of the project that this grant supports.

Additionally, the local partners and ODOT remain in discussions about the ongoing operations and maintenance of the proposed tunnel. The local partners have committed to ODOT that they expect those responsibilities be shared by the local government partners but to date, the details of those plans have not yet been finalized. These outstanding items are important to ODOT, and we believe it is critical that they be addressed in advance of construction, should the applicants be successful.

We recognize the tremendous value for local citizens and those of the region that lies in connecting the Queen City's central business district to the vibrant cultural, business and entertainment assets that occupy its riverfront. As we have demonstrated in our ongoing collaboration on the Brent Spence Bridge Corridor Project with Cincinnati Mayor Aftab Pureval, the Hamilton County, Ohio Commissioners, and the local business community, ODOT has a results-oriented and respectful relationship with the local leaders who are applying for this grant funding. Thus, ODOT offers its provisional support for their application for design and construction funding from the Reconnecting Communities & Neighborhoods program.

Respectfully,

Jack Marchbanks, Ph.D.
Director