



October 13, 2017

The Honorable Elaine L. Chao  
Secretary of Transportation  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue S.E.  
Washington, D.C. 20590

**Re: Support for the Rickenbacker Inland Port INFRA Application**

Dear Secretary Chao:

Founded in 1884, the Columbus Chamber of Commerce is the leading voice of business within the 11-county Columbus Region, with more than 1,400 members employing over 500,000 workers. A focus of the Chamber's government relations efforts centers on Transportation and Infrastructure, advocating for a fully integrated and advanced multi-modal transportation network to facilitate and advance the growth and sustainability of the region's logistics, manufacturing, and related industries. The Columbus Region Logistics Council (CRLC), an initiative of the Columbus Chamber, includes a diverse group of 120 member companies that span the supply chain and logistics industries. Our membership represents area companies that are committed to the growth and sustainability of the logistics industry in Central Ohio, and to the economic wellbeing of the region in general.

The Columbus Chamber and CRLC are pleased to jointly submit this letter of support for the Ohio Department of Transportation's INFRA grant application aimed at making significant improvements to the Columbus Region's rapidly growing Rickenbacker Inland Port.

This more than \$100 million investment is a top priority for the Chamber and our regional and state partners. The project's components are critical to efficient freight movement throughout Columbus and the Midwest megaregion and therefore the retention and growth of the region's established businesses, and business attraction that will lead to new job creation.

The Rickenbacker Inland Port Access Improvement project accomplishes three major goals necessary to continue the growth of this nationally-significant inland port:

1. The majority of truck traffic leaving the inland port area travels east and west on I-70 reached via I-270. Strengthening this connection and the port's access to the interstate system requires **expansion of Alum Creek Drive**. A component of USDOT's National Primary Freight Highway System (PHFS) and a state-designated and federally-accepted National Highway System (NHS) Intermodal Connector Route, Alum Creek Drive is a critical freight corridor for the region. Widening Alum Creek Drive is a priority for the Chamber due to continued complaints from area businesses about increased congestion. Not only is safety a concern, but the operations of local businesses are also being adversely affected. The traffic influx has created delays in transport and employee availability. Chamber members are developing creative ways to address these

challenges, such as moving shifts to non-traditional start times to ease employee transportation to and from the workplace.

2. As the southern end of the inland port develops, US 23 provides a secondary corridor for accessing the Rickenbacker area. **Installation of an interchange at US 23 and SR 762**, and the **widening of SR 762** between US 23 and Rickenbacker Parkway, is necessary for resiliency as freight movement increases. SR 762 was improved and established as the Rickenbacker Intermodal Connector after construction of the Norfolk Southern Rail Intermodal, a major facility on the Heartland Corridor linking to the Port of Virginia. These improvements will complete the original plan for the Intermodal Connector and maximize utility of the US 23 corridor.
3. The long-planned **completion of Rickenbacker Parkway** will provide a crucial alternative route for freight and passenger movements north and south of Rickenbacker International Airport (LCK). The parkway, along with **improvements to Airbase Road**, will also open up additional land for development, ensuring the area can support large-scale economic development opportunities in close proximity of distribution and industrial facilities to the transportation assets of the inland port. The region takes pride in the fact that we are a global logistics hub within a ten-hour drive of half of the U.S. population and is the nation's 2<sup>nd</sup> lowest effective tax rate for new distribution centers. As we work to expand our exports market, we need prime locations to serve the new businesses eager to reside in the area.

For the aforementioned reasons, we respectfully request that the U.S. Department of Transportation consider the importance of these improvements to the prosperity of our region's most important economic generator, the Rickenbacker Inland Port.

Sincerely,



Don DePerro  
President & CEO