

April 11, 2022

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
West Building – 1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Mr. Secretary:

I am writing to express our support for the Joint Venture of the City of Decatur and Macon County Illinois' 2022 RAISE grant application for construction of a grade separation and interchange at Brush College Road and Faries Parkway in Decatur.

Brush College Road is a critical conduit for freight, light vehicles and public transportation in Decatur and the Central Illinois region. Everyday thousands of people travel to work and school on Brush College Road and encounter significant and frequent bottlenecks at the Norfolk Southern grade crossing at Faries Parkway. In fact, the crossing averages 17.2 hours of blockages per week, which is expected to increase to 24 hours of blockages per week by 2035.

This crossing is one of the most dangerous in the region with 12 accidents in 10 years, 5 with injuries. The frequent rail traffic also negatively impacts freight mobility and access to jobs. The Decatur Public Transportation System fixed route buses have experienced delays totaling 33½ hours over a two-month period in Decatur, with this crossing being one of the most blocked in the area. This is significant since the crossing lies between much of the population center of Decatur and Richland Community College.

Brush College Road connects with Interstate 72 to the north serving as the connection between the Midwest Inland Port and the Interstate, making this investment crucial to the continued development of the Port (intermodal facility) and viability and growth of existing businesses in the area. In addition, major regional employers are located on or near Brush College Road and rely heavily on the corridor for the transportation of goods and services as well as employees.

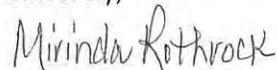
This project will also provide much needed multiuse connectivity between residential areas and the industrial center of Central Illinois and the Community College. By offering active transportation options to nearby residents located in areas of persistent poverty, the project will help increase access to jobs and advanced educational opportunities.

This project was fully funded based on the engineer's estimate and went to bid this past January (2022). Unfortunately, inflated costs of materials and labor resulted in the project being bid \$16 million over the engineer's estimate bringing the total project cost to \$76 million. This transformation project is literally ready to go once the additional funds can be obtained.

The City of Decatur and Macon County have been strongly committed to upgrading the region's infrastructure to increase economic opportunity and create jobs in Central Illinois. To that end, significant local public investments have been made to upgrade the sewer system, revitalize downtown Decatur and dredge Lake Decatur. In addition, the City has recently enacted a motor fuel tax to invest in local roads and streets. These investments totaling over \$100 million are support to the area's industry and improving the quality of life for residents. Because of these investments and the bids received on this project, the City is seeking this grant to cover the bid gap of \$16 million.

Given the many public benefits associated with this project, I strongly urge you to support this grant. Thank you for your consideration, and I look forward to working with you on this and other opportunities to address transportation issues across Illinois.

Sincerely,



Mirinda Rothrock, President
Decatur Regional Chamber of Commerce