

CT
NJ NY
Regional Plan Association

September 14, 2009

The Honorable Ray LaHood
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
9th Floor
Washington, DC 20590

Re: Letter of Support for Downtown Crossing in New Haven, CT

Dear Secretary LaHood:

On behalf of Regional Plan Association, I am pleased to express our strong support for and commitment to the City of New Haven's TIGER grant application for the Downtown Crossing project. Downtown Crossing includes the proposed conversion of the Route 34 East highway to an urban boulevard and the associated economic development of "Parcel D".

Regional Plan Association has worked with the City on a variety of initiatives throughout our over 80 year history planning in the metropolitan region and this project represents a phenomenal opportunity to create jobs while repositioning this historic city for the next generation of sustainable prosperity in the 21st Century. This project has significant mobility, environmental, and economic benefits to the city and the region.

The city's historic and walkable heart was severed from its transit center along the Northeast Corridor by the construction of a sunken Route 34. Thankfully never completed along its entire route, this stub highway has very little volume and its environmental and social impacts far outweigh its transportation benefits. By removing this highway and replacing it with a boulevard, pedestrian flow between the downtown and the inter-city and commuter rail service will be made more attractive transitioning the city to a transit-oriented downtown of the future. The project for which this grant is being sought is the first step towards achieving this livable communities objective. More people walking and using transit will simultaneously improve local air quality in this ethnically and economically mixed neighborhood while reducing the region's greenhouse gas emissions.

This mobility improvement has the added benefit of creating developable land between the downtown and Yale-New Haven Hospital where there currently is none. The City and private development team are ready to go with a 400,000 s.f. commercial lab building in the heart of the New Haven health sciences community. This new development complements over \$2 billion in recent and planned investment as New Haven emerges from the recession as an international center of influence in biotechnology and health sciences.

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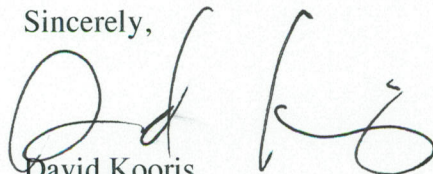
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This project will have both an immediate and prolonged impact on the local and state economies. Construction activities will create 2,000 jobs immediately and contribute \$184 million in direct and indirect spending over the next three years. Over the long-term, the new building will create nearly 1,000 jobs supporting cutting-edge medical research. These employees will generate \$114 million in annual economic activity from wage earnings of nearly \$80 million.

This project epitomizes the future of New Haven and the region. It will enable multi-modal mobility by improving pedestrian access between downtown, the bio-medical employment center, and the city's primary transit station. In doing so, it will enable a reduction in the city transportation emissions and improvement in local air quality while creating new development opportunities that will contribute to the local economy now and for years to come. This is the type of project that will lay the foundation of our livable communities of the future and this historic city is a prime location to chart the course to sustainability.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



David Kooris
Vice President