

Application for Federal Assistance SF-424		
* 1. Type of Submission: ☐ Preapplication ☒ Application ☐ Changed/Corrected Application		
* 2. Type of Application: ☒ New ☐ Continuation ☐ Revision		
* If Revision, select appropriate letter(s): * Other (Specify): 		
* 3. Date Received: 02/18/2026		4. Applicant Identifier:
5a. Federal Entity Identifier: 		5b. Federal Award Identifier:
State Use Only:		
6. Date Received by State: 		7. State Application Identifier:
8. APPLICANT INFORMATION:		
* a. Legal Name: County of Hamilton OH		
* b. Employer/Taxpayer Identification Number (EIN/TIN): 31-6000063		* c. UEI: ZC2HNMHB1RJ5
d. Address:		
* Street1: 138 East Court Street, Room 603		
Street2:		
* City: Cincinnati		
County/Parish:		
* State: OH: Ohio		
Province:		
* Country: USA: UNITED STATES		
* Zip / Postal Code: 45202-1215		
e. Organizational Unit:		
Department Name: 		Division Name:
f. Name and contact information of person to be contacted on matters involving this application:		
Prefix:		* First Name: Cheryl
Middle Name:		
* Last Name: Floyd		
Suffix:		
Title: Grants Coordinator and Budget Analyst		
Organizational Affiliation: County of Hamilton OH		
* Telephone Number: 513-946-4315		Fax Number:
* Email: cheryl.floyd@hamilton-co.org		

Application for Federal Assistance SF-424

* 9. Type of Applicant 1: Select Applicant Type:

B: County Government

Type of Applicant 2: Select Applicant Type:

Type of Applicant 3: Select Applicant Type:

* Other (specify):

* 10. Name of Federal Agency:

US Department of Transportation

11. Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number:

CFDA Title:

* 12. Funding Opportunity Number:

DTOS59-26-RA-BUILD

* Title:

FY 2026 National Infrastructure Investments

13. Competition Identification Number:

Title:

14. Areas Affected by Project (Cities, Counties, States, etc.):

Add Attachment

Delete Attachment

View Attachment

* 15. Descriptive Title of Applicant's Project:

Fort Washington Way Project: A Strategic Infrastructure Investment for Economic Growth

Attach supporting documents as specified in agency instructions.

Add Attachments

Delete Attachments

View Attachments

Application for Federal Assistance SF-424**16. Congressional Districts Of:**

* a. Applicant

OH 01

* b. Program/Project

OH 01

Attach an additional list of Program/Project Congressional Districts if needed.

Add Attachment

Delete Attachment

View Attachment

17. Proposed Project:

* a. Start Date:

02/01/2027

* b. End Date:

09/28/2029

18. Estimated Funding (\$):

* a. Federal	25,000,000.00
* b. Applicant	25,000,000.00
* c. State	0.00
* d. Local	0.00
* e. Other	0.00
* f. Program Income	0.00
* g. TOTAL	50,000,000.00

*** 19. Is Application Subject to Review By State Under Executive Order 12372 Process?**☐ a. This application was made available to the State under the Executive Order 12372 Process for review on☐ b. Program is subject to E.O. 12372 but has not been selected by the State for review.☒ c. Program is not covered by E.O. 12372.*** 20. Is the Applicant Delinquent On Any Federal Debt? (If "Yes," provide explanation in attachment.)**☐ Yes☒ No

If "Yes", provide explanation and attach

Add Attachment

Delete Attachment

View Attachment

21. *By signing this application, I certify (1) to the statements contained in the list of certifications** and (2) that the statements herein are true, complete and accurate to the best of my knowledge. I also provide the required assurances** and agree to comply with any resulting terms if I accept an award. I am aware that any false, fictitious, or fraudulent statements or claims may subject me to criminal, civil, or administrative penalties. (U.S. Code, Title 18, Section 1001)

☒ ** I AGREE

** The list of certifications and assurances, or an internet site where you may obtain this list, is contained in the announcement or agency specific instructions.

Authorized Representative:

Prefix:

* First Name:

Jeff

Middle Name:

* Last Name:

Aluotto

Suffix:

* Title:

County Administrator

* Telephone Number:

513-639-4439

Fax Number:

* Email:

jeff.aluotto@hamiltoncountyohio.gov

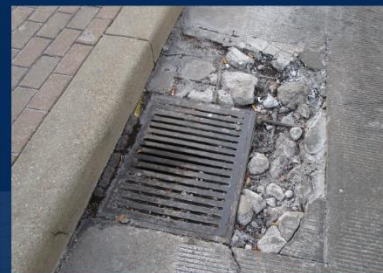
* Sign



* Date Signed:

02/18/2026

FORT WASHINGTON WAY PROJECT: A Strategic Infrastructure Investment for Economic Growth



PROJECT DESCRIPTION

FEBRUARY 2026

Submitted for FY 2026 Better Utilizing Investments to
Leverage Development (BUILD) Grant Program



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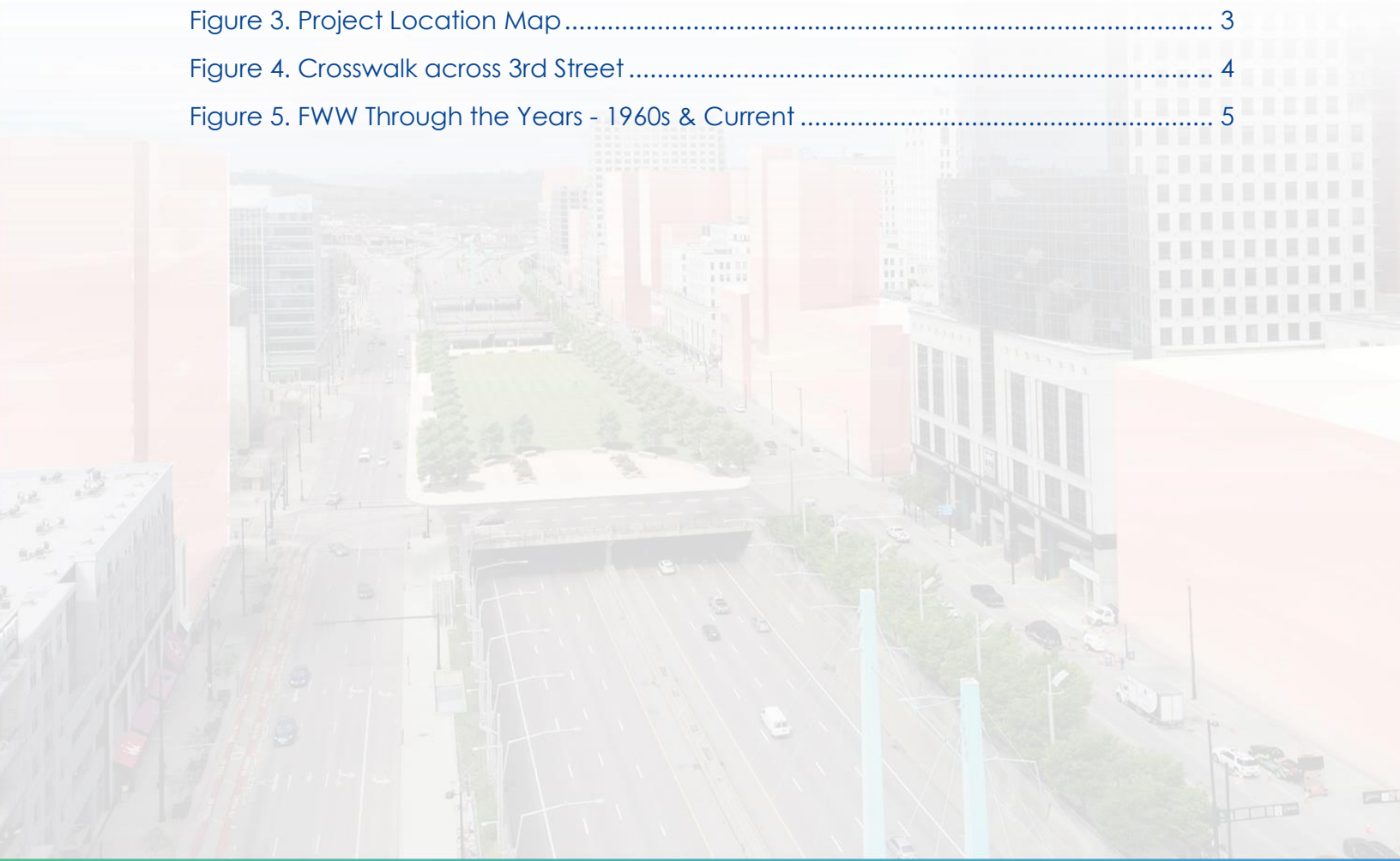
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PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Hamilton County, Ohio is requesting \$25 million in Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) Grant Program funding to be matched by \$25 million in local funds from Hamilton County (County), the City of Cincinnati (City), and the Cincinnati Regional Chamber (Cincinnati Chamber), among others to fully fund all preliminary design, environmental documentation, final design, and construction associated with Phase 1 of the **Fort Washington Way Project: A Strategic Infrastructure Investment for Economic Growth** (hereafter referred to as the FWW Project).

If successfully funded, the County and its partners will be able to realize the vision, 30 years in the making, of reconnecting Cincinnati's **Central Business District** (CBD) to **The Banks Riverfront District** (The Banks) by providing a 1.2-acre highway cap and plaza over the eight-lane divided sunken highway which carries Interstate 71 (I-71) /U.S. Route 50, locally known as Fort Washington Way (FWW). The FWW Project will also reconfigure local surface streets to improve access, mobility, and revitalize development in this economically significant region.

The FWW Project builds upon the forethought of civic leaders and community partners who successfully advocated, and privately funded, the inclusion of foundation pilings that could support a future highway cap when FWW was reconstructed in 2000. Phase 1 of the FWW Project, shown as green rectangle in Figure 1, will design and construct one block of the highway cap structure between Vine Street and Walnut Street above FWW, integrated space for tunnel safety systems below, and construct street safety improvements, all of which will be supported by the structural pilings included during the original reconstruction of FWW. This continued investment will create connectivity from the CBD to The Banks while also improving safety for all-modes on adjacent surface streets in Cincinnati's core.

The FWW Project represents the first phase in what will be a two-phase construction plan. Ultimately, Phase 2 (shown as blue rectangles in Figure 1) will construct nearly 3.5 acres of additional cap space between Vine Street and Race Street, 0.25 acres west of Race Street, and 0.25 acres east of Walnut Street. Extent of full build-out is shown in Figure 1. Phase 1 can be constructed independently of Phase 2 and would not require rework once construction for Phase 2 begins.



Figure 1. Project Location and Phases

Once constructed the FWW Project will provide the following benefits:

- Create 1.2 acres of new space in the heart of Cincinnati's CBD, providing an amenity to the area while also capturing stormwater.
- Improve safety for motorists and non-motorists travelling between the CBD and The Banks through improving four intersections with traffic calming and pedestrian safety measures and introducing new bike lanes.



- Improve transportation connections, including access to the Cincinnati Streetcar, the Riverfront Transit Center, between The Banks and downtown Cincinnati, and future bus-rapid transit on the corridor.
- Increase adjacent property values and present an opportunity to spur \$875 million of mixed-use development and housing in an Opportunity Zone.

1. Scope of Work

The FWW Project will:

- Complete public engagement, preliminary and final design, and environmental work for Phase 1 and Phase 2 to advance project delivery
- Construct an elevated 1.2-acre cap structure over FWW between Vine Street and Walnut Street to revitalize economic development in Cincinnati's premier CBD
- Design and construct necessary elements for all interior Tunnel Operating Systems to maintain compatibility with full build-out during Phase 2. These may include tunnel ventilation, fire protection, electrical systems, roadway lighting, safety features, among others
- Remove and replace bridges at Walnut Street ([NBI ID 3106314](#)) and Vine Street ([NBI ID 3106209](#)) to address current issues related to leaking box beams, icicles on bridges above interstate traffic, settlement at approach slabs and streetcar tracks, erosion of backfill, damaged pedestrian fencing, leakage into the Central Riverfront Transit Center, drainage damage from large planters, membrane overlay deterioration, and widespread concrete curb damage
- Construct multimodal improvements and traffic safety countermeasures along surface roads and intersections within the project area

The cap structures needed for the FWW Project will be of modular-adjacent, prestressed concrete box beam construction, made continuous for live load (Figure 2). Piers will be cast-in-place walls and existing openings in piers at bridges will have new walls

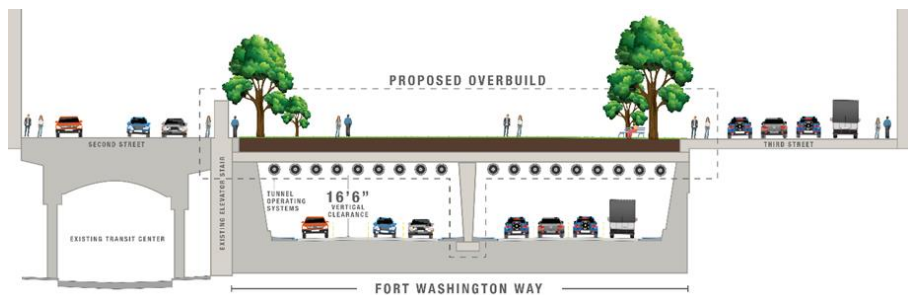


Figure 2. Schematic Rendering of FWW upon Construction

installed with fire rated emergency doors at designated intervals to provide safe passage in the event of an emergency. The structure will not be affected by fire in the event of an accident. There will be no impact to the existing roadway design of FWW, which will not be altered as part of the FWW Project. The cap will be designed and constructed to accommodate future tunnel ventilation requirements which would be needed as part of a future Phase 2.

While the final design elements will be determined via a public engagement process, the open cap space would provide opportunities for beautifying transportation infrastructure through the use of context-appropriate design such as urban tree canopies, soil, grass, drainage, watering system, and electrical power;



and a 4,400 sq. ft. civic plaza within the open space, equipped with concrete pavers, seating walls, planters, and ornamental landscaping.

Additionally, the FWW Project includes street safety improvements along 2nd Street and 3rd Street. Both 2nd Street and 3rd Street currently operate as one-way pairs, each with five travel lanes. As part of the FWW Project, the City will redesign each street to include **pedestrian safety improvements** such as curb bump-outs, high visibility crosswalks, accessible pedestrian signals (APS), leading pedestrian intervals, and landscaping treatments. Also included in these improvements will be a new, one-mile, two-way protected bike lane, either along 2nd Street or 3rd Street, as well as along Elm Street and Broadway Street to connect into the existing **CROWN regional trail network**.

2. Current Design Level

Conceptual planning (15% design) for the FWW Project has been completed. In addition to capital costs, the Project is also seeking funds to complete preliminary and final design as well as environmental documentation for both phases anticipated to begin in February 2027. The County anticipates obligating the grant agreement by February 2027 through a phased funding request to initiate and complete preliminary design, final design, and environmental documentation, prior to fully obligating the grant agreement.

It is expected that the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review will progress through to a Categorical Exclusion (CE). Should BUILD funding be awarded, the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT), a project partner, would lead NEPA on behalf of Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) for final NEPA determination, review, and compliance. With funding, construction could begin as early as Spring 2028 and be completed by late Fall 2029. The Project is within FY 2026 BUILD grant's obligation and expenditure deadlines. The Project cost estimates are based on the 15 percent conceptual design. A 7.5% contingency was included in the budget to account for any unexpected costs.

3. Project Location

The FWW Project site includes the section of the depressed FWW bounded by 2nd Street, 3rd Street, Vine Street, and Walnut Street contained within Ohio's 1st congressional district in the City of Cincinnati, Hamilton County, Ohio. The FWW Project is located between the CBD and The Banks area along I-71. The Banks is located along the Ohio River and also connects Cincinnati with northern Kentucky. The approximate geospatial location of the FWW Project is 39.098456, -84.511460.



Figure 3. Project Location Map



According to the BUILD [Project Location Verification](#) tool, the Project is located in Cincinnati, OH--KY urban area which has a population of 1,686,744. The Project corridor sits in census tract 39061026500, which is a designated Area of Persistent Poverty (APP) as well as a [Qualified Opportunity Zone](#).

According to [current census figures](#), the greater Cincinnati region is home to 2.2 million people, 310,000 of whom live within the City limits. Roughly 18,000 people live within the downtown neighborhoods of the CBD, Over-the-Rhine, West End, and Pendleton. Another 40,961 people live in the City of Covington, Kentucky, directly across the Ohio River from The Banks; all neighborhoods are within 1 mile of FWW.

The City is the primary economic engine for the region, providing approximately 225,000 jobs and facilitating the efficient flow of commodities along its interstates and major thoroughfares. Jobs are distributed throughout the city but are found in the highest density in the urban core, predominantly located within one mile north of FWW. Recent census data indicate, there are an estimated 73,000 jobs within one mile of FWW. Of those jobs, 24.6% (17,959 jobs) require a high school degree (or equivalent) or less. Approximately 16.3% of jobs (11,887) are held by workers with monthly earnings of \$1,250 or less.

4. Addressing Transportation Challenges

The Project will address a set of transportation challenges, directly related to the BUILD Merit Criteria, and aid the revitalization of Cincinnati's CBD and The Banks. These include:

Bridging the Physical Separation of Economic Hubs: The FWW continues to function as a physical and operational barrier between two of Cincinnati's most socially and economically significant activity centers: downtown's CBD and The Banks district. The below-grade highway trench and the limited number and quality of crossing points reduce the continuity of urban circulation, lengthen walking routes, and complicate pedestrian and bicycle movements. As a result, access between major destinations is constrained despite their close geographic proximity, creating friction in daily travel patterns and limiting the full economic integration of the area. As noted above, the concentration of nearby population generates substantial daily cross-corridor travel demand for work, events, services, and recreation, placing pressure on a limited set of crossings and intersections.

State of Good Repair Issues: The high job density, combined with major regional attractions south of FWW, including stadiums, riverfront parks, entertainment venues, offices, and housing at The Banks, produces heavy multimodal travel demand across the corridor throughout the day and during large events. Existing crossings are insufficient and in dilapidated state to serve commuters, visitors, residents, and service vehicles simultaneously, increasing operational complexity and safety exposure.



Figure 4. Crosswalk across 3rd Street

Design Deficiencies: Traffic data show that the surrounding street network is currently configured primarily as multi-lane, one-way facilities designed for higher historical traffic volumes and peak directional flows. However, 2024 AADT counts indicate approximately 11,100 vehicles per day on 2nd Street and approximately 11,900 vehicles per day on 3rd Street, leaving excess lane capacity relative to



travel demand. This mismatch between roadway configuration and actual volumes contributes to higher vehicle speeds, longer pedestrian crossing distances, and uncomfortable walking conditions, which together discourage safe and convenient multimodal travel. The documented excess capacity also demonstrates that rebalancing street space for safer crossings, traffic calming, and improved multimodal access can be achieved without degrading network performance.

Together, the population, employment, and traffic data confirm that FWW Project is located in a high-demand, high-activity corridor where existing infrastructure configuration and crossing conditions create measurable transportation challenges related to access, safety, connectivity, and mobility.

5. Project History & Broader Transportation Infrastructure Investments

The **1948 Cincinnati Metropolitan Master Plan** highlighted the need for two major transportation facilities to facilitate traffic flow: a Millcreek Expressway (which became I-75) and a Third Street Distributor (later named Fort Washington Way). Construction was completed in 1961, however; by the



Figure 5. FWW Through the Years - 1960s & Current

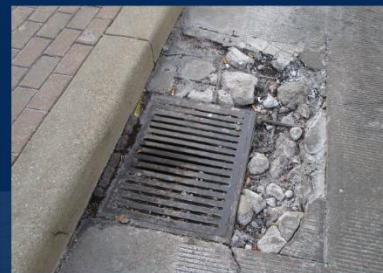
mid-1990's, it had exceeded its original design limits with more than 120,000 vehicles daily. Heavy traffic congestion, complex on- and off-ramps, and lack of pedestrian safety considerations resulted in high crashes on FWW. ODOT initiated a project to address these issues and reconstruct FWW in 1997. The project removed the complex network of on- and off-ramps to improve safety and reduced the overall width of the highway footprint – from 600 feet across to 160 feet across today (Figure 5).

The redesigned FWW also reconnected Cincinnati's historic street grid south of

3rd Street and opened an additional 15 acres of land for redevelopment of the riverfront. The area is now referred to as The Banks: a mixed-use district of public spaces, housing, offices, and entertainment which includes the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center museum, Great American Ballpark, Paycor Stadium, Smale Riverfront Park, Black Music Walk of Fame, and the Andrew J. Brady Music Center.

Recent major economic development south of FWW has occurred through the development of The Banks. In total, \$128 million in public funding has leveraged over \$800 million in private investment to create this mixed-use riverfront district bookended by Cincinnati's two professional sports stadiums. **Recent studies** estimate that there is potential for 2.7 million square feet of new or infill development, a potential estimated economic impact of nearly \$875 million in new construction activity, within one block of the FWW Project.

FORT WASHINGTON WAY PROJECT: A Strategic Infrastructure Investment for Economic Growth



PROJECT BUDGET

FEBRUARY 2026

Submitted for FY 2026 Better Utilizing Investments to
Leverage Development (BUILD) Grant Program



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PROJECT BUDGET

Hamilton County, Ohio is requesting \$25,000,000 in Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) Grant Program funding to be matched by \$25,000,000 in local funds from Hamilton County (County), the City of Cincinnati (City), and the Cincinnati Regional Chamber (Cincinnati Chamber) to fully fund all preliminary design, environmental review and documentation, final design, and construction associated with Phase 1 of the **Fort Washington Way Project: A Strategic Infrastructure Investment for Economic Growth** (hereafter referred to as the FWW Project).

If successfully funded, the County and its partners will be able to realize the vision, 30 years in the making, of reconnecting Cincinnati's Central Business District (CBD) to The Banks Riverfront District by providing a 1.2-acre highway cap and plaza over the eight-lane divided sunken highway which carries Interstate 71 (I-71) /U.S. Route 50 and is locally known as Fort Washington Way (FWW). The FWW Project will also reconfigure surface streets to improve access, mobility, and revitalize development in this economically significant region.

1. Sources, Uses, and Availability

The total future eligible cost of the Project is \$50,000,000, estimated in year of expenditure (YOE) dollars, and does not include previously incurred expenses. Future eligible expenses included in the FY 2026 BUILD request are for planning and construction funds to conduct:

- 1) appropriate class of action of National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) environmental documentation for Phases 1 & 2
- 2) preliminary and final engineering design for Phase 1, and preliminary engineering for Phase 2
- 3) construction and construction administration for Phase 1, and
- 4) costs associated with contingency and inflation

To date, the County and its partners have spent \$200,000 on conceptual planning (15% design) to advance project delivery. The planning level cost estimate has been prepared based on the 15% design.

According to the BUILD **Project Location Verification** tool, the Project is located in Cincinnati, OH--KY urban area which has a population of 1,686,744. The Project corridor sits in census tract 39061026500, which is a designated Area of Persistent Poverty (APP) as well as a **Qualified Opportunity Zone**. Based on this designation, the Project can request up to 100% federal funding through the BUILD grant. However, the County is requesting \$25,00,000 (50% of the total future eligible cost) through the FY 26 BUILD capital funds and is committed to providing a local match of \$25,000,000 (50%) to meet the consideration of competitive selection factors, as noted in the Letters of Financial Commitment. Tables 1 and 2 present the Project budget and funding breakdown.



Hamilton County and its partners have accounted for sufficient contingency, and appropriate inflation amounts, for any unanticipated cost increases.

Table 1. Cost Classifications by Funding Source

COST CLASSIFICATION	BUILD FUNDS	NON-FEDERAL FUNDS	TOTAL PROJECT COST	PERCENTAGE
Design and NEPA	\$5,488,000	\$0	\$5,488,000	11.0%
Construction	\$19,512,000	\$16,253,000	\$35,765,000	71.5%
Contingency	\$0	\$8,747,000	\$8,747,000	17.5%
Total Project Cost	\$25,000,000	\$25,000,000	\$50,000,000	100%

Table 2. Expenditures by Fiscal Year

	PREVIOUSLY INCURRED	FY27	FY28	FY29
Design & Environmental Documentation	\$200,000	\$5,014,000	\$474,000	
Construction			\$6,960,000	\$28,805,000
Contingency			\$1,702,000	\$7,045,000
Total Future Eligible Cost		\$5,014,000	\$9,136,000	\$35,850,000

2. Contingency Amount and Plan

As noted in Table 1, the budget for this application includes a 17.5% contingency to offset any inflation and account for unforeseen cost overruns. Hamilton County and the City of Cincinnati understand the potential risks associated with estimating costs before commencing design and environmental work, demonstrated by the project's healthy construction contingency. Additionally, as is stated throughout all sections of this application, the project partners are mitigating risk by implanting a phased approach to construction, considering the FWW Project Phase 1 with a second Phase expected later.



3. Level of Design & Cost Estimates

Conceptual planning (15% design) for the FWW Project has been completed. The Project is seeking funds to complete preliminary and final design as well as environmental documentation anticipated to begin in July 2027. The County anticipates obligating the grant agreement by February 2027 through a phased funding request. The Project is within FY 2026 BUILD grant's obligation and expenditure deadlines. The Project cost estimates are based on the 15 percent conceptual design.

4. Cost Share

As noted above, Hamilton County's request for \$25,000,000 in BUILD Capital Construction Grant funding is matched by \$25,000,000 in local funds from the City of Cincinnati, Hamilton County, and the Cincinnati Chamber to fully fund the design and construction of the FWW Project. The total future eligible cost of the Project is \$50,000,000, estimated in YOY dollars.

If FY26 BUILD funding is not secured, the completion of the FWW Project and delivery of essential community benefits described in this application would be significantly delayed. Hamilton County and the City of Cincinnati annually manage hundreds of millions of dollars of federal, state and local funding for transportation projects, services, and have the full legal, technical, and financial capability of managing funds awarded from the FY26 BUILD Grant Program. The FWW Project will coordinate closely with the Brent Spence Bridge Corridor Project (BSBC) and delivered as complementary investments to ensure construction sequencing, traffic management, and community access improvements are coordinated across the downtown Cincinnati riverfront. Coordination with the BSBC project will ensure that temporary traffic configurations, detours, and staging areas do not compromise access to downtown neighborhoods, riverfront destinations, or multimodal connections.

The Ohio Department of Transportation has agreed to manage the federal award directly with Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and will leverage its significant experience administering federal highway funding. As such, ODOT will be the grant recipient for FY 26 BUILD funds and will work with the County and City as subrecipients to deliver all aspects of the project. The FWW Project is vital to improving accessibility and safety between the CBD and The Banks and as such, 50% of future eligible activities will come from non-federal sources. Non-federal funds will be sourced from multiple existing funding streams, including:

- City and County Capital funding via local operating budgets
- Joint City and County State of Ohio capital funding grants (2026, 2028, 2030)
- State funding and entitlements granted to MPO
- City-established Tax Increment Financing district
- Voter-approved sales tax levy to the Metro Transit Infrastructure Fund
- Grants and endowment-financing via Cincinnati Parks
- Private fundraising led by the Cincinnati Chamber and the Cincinnati Regional Chamber Foundation



5. Funding per Census Tract

According to the BUILD **Project Location Verification** tool, the Project is located in Cincinnati, OH--KY urban area which has a population of 1,686,744. The Project corridor sits in census tract 39061026500, which is a designated Area of Persistent Poverty (APP) as well as a **Qualified Opportunity Zone**.

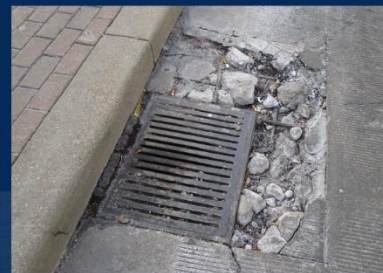
Table 3. Costs per Census Tract

2020 CENSUS TRACT(S)	PROJECT COSTS PER CENSUS TRACT	PERCENTAGE
Census Tract 39061026500	\$50,000,000	100%
Total Project Cost	\$50,000,000	100%

Table 4: Cost per Census Designated Urban Areas with Population of More than 200,000 (2020 Census)

UBRAN/RURAL	PROJECT COSTS	PERCENTAGE
Urban (2020 Census-designated urban area with a population greater than 200,000)	\$50,000,000	100%
Total Project Cost	\$50,000,000	100%

FORT WASHINGTON WAY PROJECT: A Strategic Infrastructure Investment for Economic Growth



MERIT CRITERIA

FEBRUARY 2026

Submitted for FY 2026 Better Utilizing Investments to
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MERIT CRITERIA NARRATIVE

Hamilton County, Ohio is requesting \$25 million in Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) Grant Program funding to be matched by \$25 million in local funds from Hamilton County (County), the City of Cincinnati (City), and the Cincinnati Regional Chamber (Cincinnati Chamber) to fully fund all preliminary design, environmental review and documentation, final design, and construction associated with Phase 1 of the **Fort Washington Way Project: A Strategic Infrastructure Investment for Economic Growth** (hereafter referred to as the FWW Project).

If successfully funded, the FWW Project will culminate a vision, 30 years in the making; Reconnecting Cincinnati's **Central Business District** (CBD) to **The Banks Riverfront District** (The Banks) by providing a 1.2-acre highway cap and plaza over the eight-lane divided sunken highway which carries Interstate 71 (I-71) /U.S. Route 50 and is locally known as Fort Washington Way (FWW). The FWW Project will also reconfigure surface streets to improve access, mobility, and revitalize development in this economically significant region.

1. Safety

Fort Washington Way (FWW) is a concurrent section of I-71 and U.S. Route 50 and serves as a major urban, high-speed connector, running from the Brent Spence Bridge (I-75/I-71 junction) to the Lytle Tunnel in downtown Cincinnati, Ohio. The depressed highway runs through downtown Cincinnati and carries personal and commercial vehicles into and out of the CBD. While existing bridges across FWW allow for vehicular and pedestrian crossing of the highway, the local road network around FWW which run at street-level adjacent to FWW, 2nd Street and 3rd Street, have long pedestrian crossing distances (in excess of



Figure 1. Cracked concrete around drainage

60 feet) across five lanes of traffic on each roadway. The existing design of these streets poses a significant barrier to safe mobility for everyone travelling between downtown and the Banks. With existing **traffic volumes of more than 23,000 vehicles per day**, creating separated vehicle to bicycle and pedestrian areas, safety will improve. With a total of **589 documented crashes and 184 injuries within the project area** from 2021 to 2025, the proposed infrastructure improvements positive impact on safety will have an approximately **\$32.53 million vehicle crash reduction benefit** (in discounted 2024 dollars).

Pedestrian and Vehicular Safety

The FWW Project proposes improvements on 2nd Street and 3rd Street to enhance pedestrian safety and accessibility. In the area of the proposed pedestrian safety improvements, along 2nd Street and 3rd Street at Vine Street and Walnut Street, there **were 67 documented crashes between 2021 and 2025 resulting in 28 injuries**. Crashes have **increased from approximately 11% to 24%** from 2021 to 2025. This high level of crashes and injuries shows a need for safety improvements in the project area.



The FWW Project includes pedestrian improvements at four intersections which will include traffic calming and pedestrian safety measures, such as adding curb bump-outs, new high-visibility crosswalks, modernized accessible pedestrian signals (APS), and leading pedestrian intervals. These improvements will provide positive pedestrian safety improvements, including reducing crossing distances, giving them priority over turning vehicles, enhancing safety the visual impaired through audible crossing cues, and enhancing the visibility of people using crosswalks. The four main intersections on Vine and Walnut streets will be fully reconstructed and include concrete curb bump outs, while the remaining six intersections will be reconstructed as part of phase 2 the project.

Cincinnati is **a leader in street safety enhancements** through the **identification of safety concerns** as well as **the implementation of quick-build safety improvements** across its neighborhoods. Based on their close partnership, Hamilton County will incorporate those quick-build safety improvements into the FWW Project. Based on the benefits cost analysis completed, the pedestrian infrastructure investment is expected to result in an increase of nearly 4.2 million pedestrian trips over a 20-year period when compared to the no-build scenario.

The FWW Project improves access to jobs, education, and healthcare by adding protected bicycle facilities that separate riders from vehicle traffic and provide safe, direct multimodal routes into and through downtown. The CBD currently lacks a continuous network of separated bike infrastructure, forcing cyclists and micromobility users into mixed traffic and increasing crash risk. The FW Project closes this gap by delivering protected routes that reduce conflicts and expand reliable, low-cost travel options for workers, students, and residents.



Figure 2. Project Intersection

Together with the City's planned 5.5-mile downtown bike network, the project will create a connected system linking major employment areas with regional trails and neighborhood corridors, including the Ohio River Trail, Purple People Bridge, Central Parkway protected lane, State-to-Central Complete Streets corridor, and the 34-mile CROWN regional trail loop. These connections provide safe, continuous access between neighborhoods and downtown job centers, schools, civic destinations, and healthcare facilities.

As part of the FWW Project, the County will construct approximately one mile of protected bike lanes designed specifically to separate bicyclists from moving traffic using concrete curb barriers, dedicated signal phases, and high-visibility pavement markings. A two-way protected facility between Broadway Street and Elm Street will provide a direct, low-stress connection between the FWW cap and the broader downtown bicycle and pedestrian network. Additional protected segments along Broadway Street and Elm Street between 2nd Street and Mehring Way will extend these safety benefits and create continuous, protected access to the Ohio River Trail and CROWN network. These facilities are modeled on successful



protected corridors such as the Central Parkway bike lane, where barrier-separated designs have improved safety and user comfort.

Safety concerns along the project corridors are well documented. Between 2021 and 2025, 522 crashes resulting in 156 injuries occurred along the proposed bike lane streets, demonstrating the risks associated with current shared-traffic conditions. By right-sizing roadway space and installing protected facilities, the project reduces exposure between vehicles and vulnerable users and improves overall safety.

The protected network will also integrate directly with the existing Red Bike bikeshare station, with significant annual checkouts, at 2nd Street and Vine Street, supporting first- and last-mile access to employment and services for residents without access to a personal vehicle. With strong existing bikeshare usage and safer facilities, the project is expected to significantly increase ridership. **Benefit–cost analysis estimates approximately 1 million additional cycling trips** over a 20-year period compared to the no-build scenario, reflecting expanded safe access to jobs and essential destinations.

Cold-weather performance creates additional safety vulnerability. Planter drainage pipes are susceptible to freezing, producing **icicle formation along bridge fascias above the interstate**, posing hazards to motorists below and requiring complex, multi-agency emergency response for removal. Decking the trench and redesigning waterproofing and drainage systems would eliminate these exposure points and remove the icicle hazard entirely.



Figure 3. Icicle Formation on Bridge Fascias

2. Environmental Sustainability

Cincinnati has long been recognized as a leader in environmental sustainability, having been named the nation's Most Sustainable City twice since 2018 by Site Selection Magazine, #2 for Urban Agriculture by Best Cities for Urban Gardening and 4th out of the top 100 Cities with the Best Parks by the Trust for Public Lands, most recently in 2025.

The FWW Project is specifically designed to improve the resilience of at-risk transportation infrastructure to extreme weather events and flooding while incorporating natural infrastructure elements including permeable surfaces, stormwater retention systems, and expanded urban tree canopy to measurably reduce runoff, heat island effects, and environmental impacts in the downtown corridor.

The FWW Project corridor has demonstrated vulnerability to extreme rainfall and flooding events, including multiple roadway flooding incidents and lane closures, most recently during the April 2025 regional flooding event. Because FWW is a depressed highway facility with constrained drainage and high



Figure 4. Flooding at Project Intersection



traffic volumes, stormwater surges can quickly overwhelm existing systems, creating safety risks and operational disruptions. The FWW Project directly addresses this risk through the construction of a structural cap and greenspace system that functions as distributed stormwater infrastructure and reduces runoff entering the highway drainage network during peak storm events.

The Project will construct approximately 1.2 acres of new permeable cap space incorporating engineered soil systems, vegetated areas, and integrated water retention features. Based on project hydrologic analysis, **the cap is expected to capture approximately 275,000 cubic feet (about 2 million gallons) of stormwater annually** that would otherwise be discharged into the roadway drainage system and downstream waterways under the no-build scenario. Retained stormwater will be stored and reused for irrigation, reducing potable water demand and lowering peak runoff rates during heavy precipitation events. By intercepting and managing runoff at the surface, the FWW Project reduces the likelihood that intense rainfall will overwhelm existing drainage systems and contribute to roadway flooding.

The cap design incorporates multiple qualifying green infrastructure strategies consistent with USDOT environmental sustainability criteria, including:

- \$0.65 million in discounted benefits from stormwater retention and other environmental benefits
- Permeable landscaped surfaces and engineered soils
- Integrated stormwater retention and controlled release features
- Vegetated planting areas and bioswale-type treatment zones
- Expanded urban tree canopy and shade coverage
- Greenspace berm and soil systems that absorb and slow runoff



Figure 5. Project Site Flooding

In addition to rainfall management, the cap structure and greenspace improve winter resilience. Snow accumulation that currently falls directly into the depressed highway section, complicating removal operations and increasing operational risk, will instead be captured at surface level, allowing safer and more efficient removal and reducing winter weather disruption to the highway facility.

3. Quality of Life

The FWW Project is designed to remove physical and functional transportation barriers, reconnect communities to direct and affordable travel options, enhance accessibility through Universal Design, and measurably expand safe multimodal access. The Project converts a divisive, limited-access highway trench and constrained surface corridors into a connected, human-scaled transportation network that improves system usability, increases nonmotorized accessibility, and supports efficient multimodal movement.

Removal of Physical Barriers and Community Connection

FWW currently functions as a physical and psychological barrier between downtown destinations, riverfront assets, employment centers, and adjacent neighborhoods. The Project removes this barrier



through the construction of a cap and redesigned surface corridors to restore direct pedestrian, bicycle, and local street connectivity. The Project creates improved connections to jobs, civic facilities, parks, and transit services by reducing the barrier created by the depressed FWW facility. By capping FWW, the Project delivers measurable improvements for residents and workers to more safely get to destinations and transit and promote access to the transportation network used within the Greater Cincinnati region.

Universal Design and Accessibility for Families and Individuals with Disabilities

All park, pedestrian, and bicycle facilities delivered through the Project will follow Universal Design principles to ensure accessibility for users of all ages and abilities. Improvements include Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)-compliant pathways, accessible curb ramps, protected crossings, tactile warning surfaces, stroller- and wheelchair-friendly path materials, accessible seating and rest areas, shade coverage, and intuitive circulation layouts. These elements enhance usability for families traveling with children, older adults, and individuals with disabilities while maintaining safe and efficient transportation operations. The corridor design prioritizes predictable crossings and shorter exposure distances to improve safety and usability for mobility-limited users.

Increased Accessibility for Nonmotorized Travelers, Including in Underserved Areas

The Project significantly increases safe, separated infrastructure for nonmotorized travelers by adding protected bicycle lanes and upgraded pedestrian corridors along 2nd /3rd, Elm, and Broadway streets. These facilities physically separate vulnerable users from vehicle traffic and connect directly to the downtown bicycle network, the CROWN regional trail system, the Ohio River Trail, and transit services. Crash data show 589 reported crashes with 184 injuries along these corridors between 2021 and 2025, demonstrating documented safety risk under existing conditions. The protected facility design directly addresses this need and expands safe, low-cost transportation options for residents and workers traveling to and from the area.

Improved Vehicular Operations and Network Efficiency

By reorganizing surface street operations and reducing modal conflicts through separated facilities and improved crossings, the Project improves overall corridor efficiency and reliability. Separating pedestrian and bicycle movements from vehicle lanes reduces friction and conflict points, supporting smoother vehicular flow and more predictable operations while maintaining safety performance.

Intermodal and Last-Mile Connections

The FWW Project strengthens intermodal connectivity and last-mile access by directly linking pedestrian and bicycle improvements with transit stops, bikeshare stations, and regional trail facilities. The corridor connects to an active bikeshare station averaging approximately 1,000 annual checkouts and ties into multiple regional active transportation routes. These connections improve first- and last-mile access to transit and employment centers and provide additional affordable travel options that reduce dependence on single-occupancy vehicles.



Improved Travel Experience for Families

The FWW Project improves the travel experience for families and caregivers through human-centered, context-appropriate design. The civic space above the highway cap will enhance the connections to Smale Riverfront Park which is an amenity for families. Corridor and facility improvements will also include accessible pathways, stroller-friendly surfaces, intuitive circulation patterns, seating and shaded rest areas, and family-oriented amenities that make short and mid-distance trips safer, more comfortable, and more predictable. These elements directly enhance usability for families traveling with children, older adults, and caregivers while preserving safe and efficient transportation operations.



Figure 6. Elevator Out of Service

The FWW Project also improves wayfinding and user experience through clear, legible connections among major downtown destinations, transit services, and the regional trail and bicycle network. The integrated layout of pedestrian and bicycle facilities is designed to support intuitive navigation, visible routing, and predictable travel paths for users of all ages and abilities. Clear routing structure and coordinated signage reduce confusion and improve trip reliability, particularly for caregivers and infrequent users.

4. Mobility and Community Connectivity

The FWW Project delivers high mobility and connectivity benefits by removing physical transportation barriers, enhancing accessibility through Universal Design, and expanding multimodal access for motorized and nonmotorized users. Located at the center of the region's transportation network, the Project strengthens connections among transit, roadway, bicycle, pedestrian, and intermodal facilities while improving access to more than 73,000 downtown jobs and major civic destinations, within a mile of the project corridor.

Removal of Physical Barriers and Community Connection

The FWW currently functions as a grade-separated highway barrier that limits direct connectivity between downtown, the riverfront, and adjacent neighborhood districts. The Project cap and surface corridor redesign restores continuous multimodal routes across the corridor and closing network gaps. These improvements reconnect residents and workers to affordable transportation options including transit, walking, and bicycling and create direct access between communities, employment centers, and civic destinations. By restoring surface-level continuity and safe crossings, the Project removes a long-standing physical barrier to mobility.

Enhanced Accessibility Through Universal Design

All pedestrian and bicycle facilities associated with the Project apply Universal Design principles. Improvements include ADA-compliant pathways, accessible curb ramps, protected and signalized crossings, tactile warning strips, accessible vertical access points, stroller- and wheelchair-friendly surfaces,



rest areas, and intuitive circulation patterns. The adjacent Riverfront Transit Center includes multiple street-level entrances and ADA-accessible elevators directly serving the corridor. These elements enhance system usability for families, older adults, and individuals with disabilities while maintaining efficient transportation operations.

High-Capacity Multimodal Transit Connectivity

The Project area sits within the region's primary transit hub and provides direct access to high-frequency, high-ridership services. Within one-quarter mile of the site:

- 36 Cincinnati Metro bus routes are accessible
- Government Square Transit Center (two blocks away) serves as the region's primary bus hub with 4,275 average weekday boardings
- Nine frequent routes operate at 20-minute headways or better
- Metro system ridership grew from 7.5 million trips (2021) to 13.3 million trips (2024) a 77% increase
- Nine local and nine express TANK routes connect Northern Kentucky communities
- The Southbank Shuttle provides 15-minute frequency service to the site
- The Connector streetcar provides free, year-round service and carried nearly 1.2 million trips in 2024, a 9% year-over-year increase

In addition, the Riverfront Transit Center directly adjacent to the Project will serve two planned Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) lines beginning in 2027–2028, each operating at 10-minute frequencies and connecting downtown to the University of Cincinnati, Cincinnati Children's Medical Center and other major health systems, and major residential and employment corridors. Together, these services provide high-capacity, affordable access across the region.

Improved Vehicular Access and Network Function

The FWW Project supports vehicular mobility and operational efficiency by improving surface street design and integrating circulation with the adjacent Intermodal Transit Facility. Nearly 8,000 structured parking spaces are directly accessible to the Project area accommodating regional trips and major events while concentrating parking underground to reduce surface congestion and conflicts. Improved street design, crossing treatments, and modal separation reduce friction points and improve overall corridor flow and safety.

Expanded Accessibility for Nonmotorized Travelers

The Project includes protected bicycle facilities and upgraded pedestrian corridors along 2nd/3rd Street, Elm Street, and Broadway Street that significantly increase safe access for nonmotorized travelers. These facilities connect directly to the CROWN regional trail network, the City's planned downtown bike network, and the State-to-Central Complete Streets corridor. The protected design increases accessibility for nonmotorized users across income levels by providing low-cost, low-stress travel options connected to transit and employment centers.

Last-Mile Connectivity

By directly linking high-frequency transit, regional trails, protected bike lanes, pedestrian facilities, and intermodal parking within a compact area, the Project strengthens last-mile connectivity in a multimodal



framework. Travelers can efficiently transfer between modes including bus, BRT, streetcar, bicycle, walking, and personal vehicle within a short walking distance, expanding practical travel options and improving overall system connectivity.

5. Economic Competitiveness and Opportunity

The FWW Project advances national economic competitiveness and delivers broad economic and fiscal benefits by catalyzing private investment, strengthening freight and intermodal access **to more than 73,000 downtown jobs**, facilitating tourism growth, enabling major redevelopment, supporting construction delivery, and improving multimodal connectivity serving regional and interstate commerce. The Project is a capital infrastructure investment that produces measurable, data-supported economic development outcomes while improving access to key employment, logistics, and visitor districts. These outcomes include expanded property tax base, increased construction employment, long-term job growth, improved business accessibility, and increased visitor spending.

A Catalyst for Economic Growth and Private Investment

The Project is expected to unlock substantial redevelopment potential on underutilized parcels along 2nd and 3rd streets. Local market and planning analyses estimate up to **2.7 million square feet of mixed-use development** and approximately **300,000 square feet of office space**, representing as much as **\$875 million in new construction activity** and long-term expansion of the City and County tax base. The presence of a federally designated **Opportunity Zone** within the Project area further increases the likelihood of near-term private capital investment, business formation, and job creation. Comparable capped highway projects, such as Klyde Warren Park in Dallas, have demonstrated multi-billion-dollar adjacent development impacts, and regional stakeholders expect proportionate economic leverage from the FWW Project.

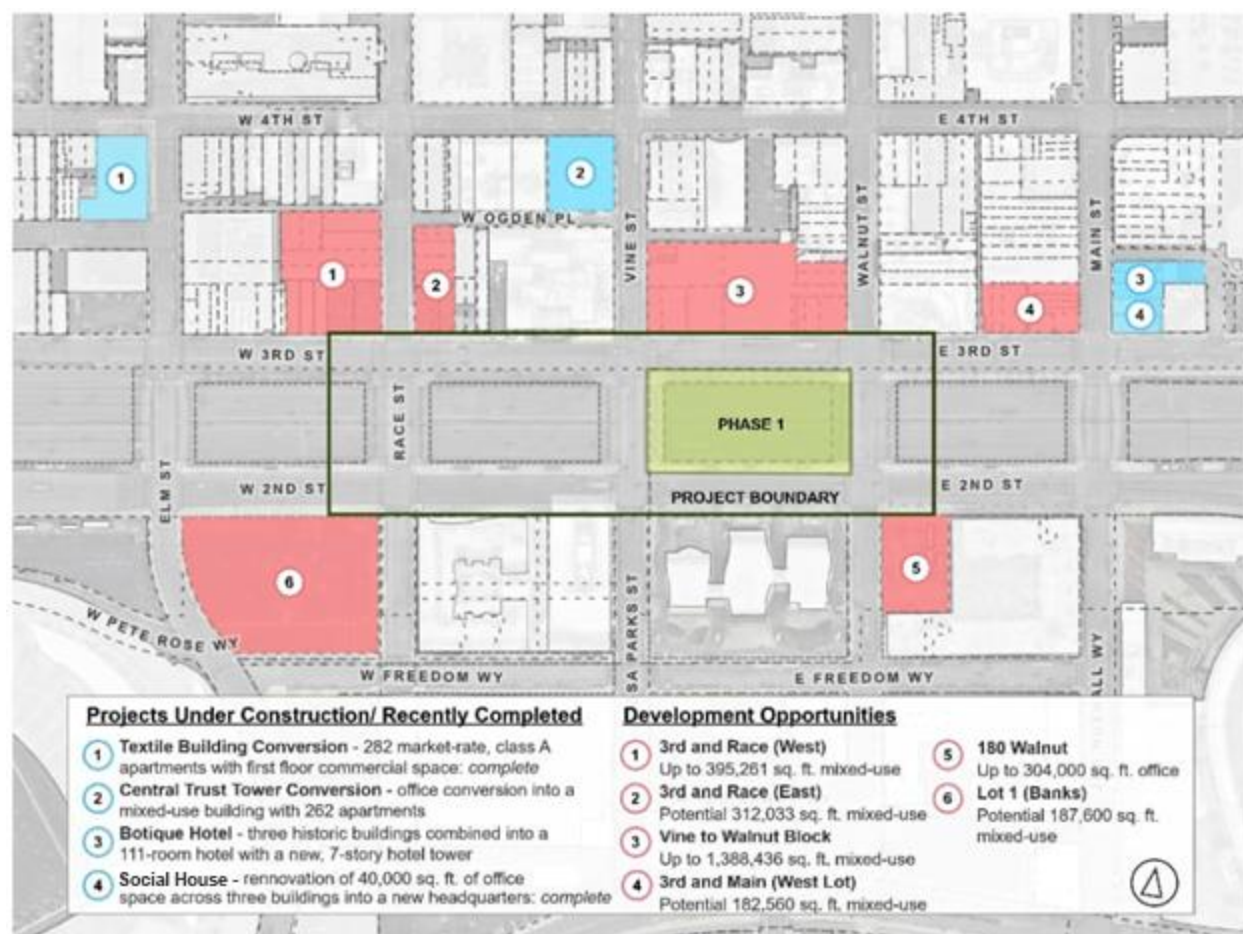


Figure 7. Properties with Potential for New Mixed-use Development Adjacent to the Project Site

The adjacent Brent Spence Bridge Corridor (BSBC) Project will transform an eight-mile segment of I-71/75 between Kentucky and Ohio, improving safety, traffic flow, and connections along one of the nation's busiest freight and passenger corridors. This investment complements the FWW Project by ensuring efficient interstate operations through downtown Cincinnati, allowing the FWW Project to prioritize urban reconnection, pedestrian access, and new public space. By addressing congestion, geometric deficiencies, and safety risks, the BSBC Project supports the FWW Project's goals of restoring neighborhoods divided by the interstate, enhancing economic development along the riverfront, and improving overall quality of life. Together, the BSBC improvements and the Cincinnati Cap create a coordinated regional strategy that strengthens national freight mobility while reconnecting communities and expanding local opportunities for residents and businesses.

Support for Tourism and Visitor Economy Growth

The FWW Project directly facilitates tourism and visitor activity by improving transportation access, safety, and circulation between the CBD and The Banks riverfront district, two of the region's highest-intensity visitor and event destinations. The FWW Project area serves major sports venues, hotels, riverfront attractions, cultural institutions, and festival spaces. By removing a physical barrier and improving



multimodal circulation, the Project supports higher visitor volumes, more reliable travel times, and safer pedestrian and bicycle access during major regional events. The proposed civic area over the highway lid will enhance connectivity between lodging, entertainment, and waterfront destinations strengthens the regional tourism economy and associated service-sector employment.

Improved Intermodal and Multimodal Freight Mobility

The Project area carries I-71/U.S. Route 50 traffic that supports regional and interstate goods movement and connects directly to Ohio River freight activity, rail corridors, and regional distribution networks. Truck counts for I-71 in Hamilton County **increased 185 percent between 2009 and 2018**. I-71 is 346 miles long and connects the OKI region south to Louisville, Kentucky, and north through Columbus to Cleveland, Ohio. Several 2018 traffic counts along I-71 in the region reported truck volumes comprising 25 percent or more of all vehicles traveling the corridor. The Project improves surface street design, reduces modal conflicts, and enhances operational reliability in a high-activity downtown freight and delivery zone. By separating pedestrian and bicycle movements from vehicle lanes and improving intersection function, the Project reduces friction and delay that affect local freight, service vehicles, and commercial deliveries operating between downtown businesses and riverfront facilities. These improvements strengthen last-mile urban goods movement within a multimodal network.

Last-Mile and Urban Goods Movement

The redesigned corridor improves last-mile access for commercial deliveries serving downtown employers, hotels, restaurants, entertainment venues, and riverfront businesses. Downtown Cincinnati contains approximately 4,147 housing units. Based on national e-commerce trends (roughly one package every 1.5 days per household), this suggests a baseline of **2,500–3,000 daily residential parcel deliveries** (UPS, FedEx, USPS, Amazon) to the downtown core alone, excluding business-to-business (B2B) shipments. Street network reconnection and operational improvements reduce out-of-direction routing and curbside conflict, improving delivery efficiency and reliability. Concentrated underground parking and intermodal access points reduce curb congestion and support more predictable truck and service vehicle circulation in the surrounding grid.

Union Participation and Cost-Effective Project Delivery

Hamilton County and the City of Cincinnati have a demonstrated history of delivering major infrastructure projects using union labor and structured labor agreements that promote cost control, workforce quality, and schedule reliability. The public parties anticipate the use of union participation and/or project labor agreement structures consistent with federal and state law to promote skilled workforce utilization, open competition, and cost-effective delivery. Prior phases of the nearby Banks district infrastructure construction achieved strong performance under similar labor frameworks.

6. State of Good Repair

The FWW Project restores and modernizes core transportation infrastructure assets that are at or beyond their intended service life, prioritizes safety-critical bridge and corridor elements with high consequences of failure, reduces long-term maintenance burdens through integrated reconstruction, and directly addresses documented and projected system vulnerabilities. The FWW Project replaces recurring patch-and-repair



cycles with comprehensive, durable design solutions across bridges, approaches, pedestrian facilities, drainage systems, and traffic control infrastructure in a critical downtown corridor.



Figure 8. State of Repair Issues with FWW

Many intersections, sidewalks, curb ramps, pedestrian crossings, and traffic control devices in the Project area were last reconstructed as part of the FWW rebuild completed in 2000 and are now approximately 25 years old which are at or beyond the City's standard replacement cycle for signals and pedestrian infrastructure. Current conditions include deteriorated curb ramps, damaged and missing pavers, buckled sidewalks from root intrusion and freeze-thaw cycles, outdated pedestrian signals, and patched surfaces that create accessibility and safety risks. The Project will reconstruct these assets using current ADA and safety standards, including new ADA-compliant curb ramps, rebuilt crosswalks, curb extensions, Accessible Pedestrian Signals (APS), and modern signal equipment that brings multiple high-use intersections into a State of Good Repair.

Documented maintenance records confirm systemic deterioration and recurring failure risk. From 2022 through February 2026, the City's 311Cincy system recorded **357 infrastructure service requests** within and immediately adjacent to the Project area. Approximately **54 percent** involved malfunctioning traffic signals or sign foundations consistent with equipment reaching the City's 25-year service life threshold. Additional requests involve potholes, sidewalk hazards, and failed storm inlets. This service history demonstrates elevated maintenance burden and asset vulnerability.



Beyond surface assets, the FWW Project addresses emerging structural and bridge-related vulnerabilities along FWW. Vehicular bridges over FWW consist of prestressed composite box beams that are currently rated in good condition but show **active leakage and efflorescence between beams** due to planter and embedded drainage system design. Planter drain pipes are cast within the prestressed beams and are inaccessible for repair, creating a projected long-term maintenance and durability risk. Recurrent clogging and leakage have been documented despite jetting and camera inspections, due to unfavorable pipe geometry and inaccessible joints.

Bridge approach slab settlement represents another recurring high-cost vulnerability. North approach slabs at multiple crossings, particularly at Race Street and Vine Street, have experienced repeated settlement, creating vertical offsets and ride quality and safety concerns. Temporary asphalt wedge repairs proved insufficient, requiring **pressure grout injection stabilization in 2012 (\$128,625)** and again in **2018**. Similar settlement at 3rd and Main streets required **grout injection repairs in 2022 (\$157,274.75)** to protect adjacent streetcar track infrastructure from structural stress. Additional settlements are projected. Integrated reconstruction as part of trench decking would allow improved subgrade compaction and permanently resolve these recurring failures.

Additional documented structural and asset vulnerabilities addressed by the FWW Project include:

- Backfill erosion at cable stay bridge abutments due to void conditions between abutments and FWW walls, causing repeated minor settlements
- Riverfront Transit Center plenum leakage at bridge approach interfaces, resulting in repeated replacement of ducts, walls, and electrical conduits due to water intrusion
- Membrane overlay deterioration on bridge decks, with prior warranty remedies no longer available after manufacturer exit
- Planter waterproofing system replacement costs (most recently \$214,069 in 2012) with predictable future replacement cycles
- Recurring curb and sidewalk concrete crushing due to expansion and drainage design conflicts
- Specialty pedestrian railing damage requiring costly custom welded repairs (\$10,604 for a single repair) due to obsolete components

The FWW Project reduces construction and maintenance burdens through efficient, integrated design. Rather than continuing isolated repairs across multiple asset classes, the trench decking and corridor reconstruction enable unified waterproofing, drainage redesign, standardization of details, reduced specialty components, and elimination of inaccessible embedded systems. This integrated approach lowers lifecycle costs, reduces emergency repair frequency, and improves inspection and maintainability.

The FWW Project also addresses drainage and surface vulnerability through upgraded stormwater and interface detailing, reducing recurring inlet failures, leakage, and localized flooding documented in maintenance records.

Through comprehensive asset renewal, bridge and approach stabilization, drainage and waterproofing redesign, intersection modernization, and integrated reconstruction, the FWW Project brings the location to a State of Good Repair criteria by restoring aging core infrastructure, prioritizing high-consequence assets, reducing lifecycle maintenance burden, and correcting documented system vulnerabilities.



7. Partnership and Collaboration

Long-standing partnerships have been the driving force in realizing the vision for Cincinnati's riverfront. Beginning with planning efforts for reimagining of FWW in the 1990s and continued through the development of the Central Riverfront Urban Design Master Plan in 2000, the development of The Banks, the collaboration and partnerships remain today. The implementation of FWW Project will be a critical piece of finally realizing the vision of reconnecting downtown Cincinnati to the riverfront, thanks in large part to the public-private partnerships that have driven this goal forward.

The FWW 2000 Team Partnership Charter highlighted the goal of creating a pedestrian friendly FWW with a grand civic space accomplished through the burying and narrowing the highway and decking over the facility to reconnect downtown and the riverfront. In addition to the FWW Partnership Charter, the **Central Riverfront Urban Design Master Plan** was developed collaboratively by Hamilton County, the City of Cincinnati, ODOT, and the Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana Regional Council of Governments (OKI), resulting in the grand spaces at The Banks and Smale Riverfront Park.

Since the completion of the Master Plan and FWW reconstruction in the late 1990s, the City and County have created and maintained **The Banks Public Partnership**, a collaborative partnership that ensures timely, safe, efficient and inclusive management of the public infrastructure of The Banks project. This organization is led by a Project Executive, which is a joint County and City position reporting directly to the County Administrator, the City Manager, and the Joint Banks Steering Committee.

The Project is part of the larger **Banks Master Plan** which is a long-term, \$800M+ public-private partnership transforming 120 acres of riverfront into a mixed-use, "live-work-play" district, anchored by two stadiums and Smale Riverfront Park. The Banks District has created a total of \$2.5 billion in direct and indirect annual economic output, which supported 28,124 jobs with approximately \$1.3 billion in total earnings. The Banks District created a total of \$89.4 million in tax revenue for state and local jurisdictions annually.

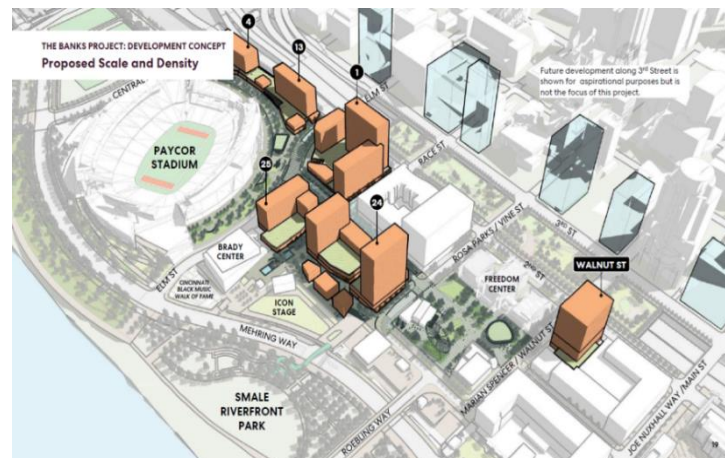


Figure 9. Banks Master Plan Rendering

The primary Project partners will continue to work collaboratively throughout the entirety of the planning, design, and construction of FWW Project. With Hamilton County as the lead grant applicant, ODOT as the recipient of the grant funding and owner of the FWW, the City as operator of the local streets, and the Chamber as a key convener of the regional business community, FWW Project will be leading by example to show how public-private partnerships can drive the transformation of an underutilized transportation asset into a new regional destination. Previous history of the reconstruction of FWW and development The Banks is a strong indicator of the ability of these partners and private sector investment into the FWW Project.



The FWW Project is a true public private partnership, with local government leadership from Hamilton County and the City of Cincinnati, along with the Cincinnati Chamber leading efforts to engage business and civic leaders. As evidenced by the array of public and private support letters for this request included as an appendix to this application, there is considerable excitement from community-based organizations and anchor institutions which are eager to experience the positive impact this project will have on Cincinnati's CBD and the region.

Continued Private Sector Investment

The opportunity to cap the space would not have been possible today without the visionary private investment during the reconstruction of FWW to include the foundation pilings that will support the capping of the highway. This \$10 million private investment by the local business community equals over \$17 million in today's dollars set the stage for the FWW Project to be a true public-private investment.

Private investment in the FWW Project will continue through an expected private-sector purchase of naming rights for the cap space. The Chamber has engaged a private sector fundraising consultant for this effort. Private sector partners will also provide key input and guidance related to the planning, design, operations, and programing of the cap space and transportation improvements.

With the Cincinnati Chamber's partnership, this project has already and will continue to leverage significant private investment as part of the overall capital stack. This will include naming rights opportunities for individuals, philanthropic organizations, and corporations.

Private sector partners have consistently provided key input and guidance related to the planning, design, operations, and programing of the cap space and transportation improvements.

Public and Community Involvement

Public engagement efforts for the FWW Project kicked off in 2023 when the County and project partners met with the **Downtown Residents Council** to gain support for developing previous and ongoing grant applications for the Project. If the Project is successfully funded through the FY26 BUILD grant program, the City plans to retain a public engagement firm with close ties to the Cincinnati community. One of the first steps will be for the project partners to form a Community Advisory Board (CAB) to ensure that community voices are heard in the development of the park space, street safety improvements, and public art.

The CAB will also guide the development of a robust Community Participation Plan (CPP) that will facilitate meaningful engagement during the design and planning process. The CPP will reach community members near the project area and in nearby communities through innovative practices including social media, online and in-person surveys, stakeholder interviews, focus groups, and public open houses. A central focus of the community participation plan will be to reach community members that live in the several Area of Persistent Poverty and Opportunity Zone Census tract located near the FWW Project and in areas accessible to the site via transit (see Appendix for list of 56 census tracts). This commitment to deep community engagement is a core principle of the City's **Engage Cincy** initiative to provide opportunities for all to participate in meaningful and proactive ways during the decision-making processes.

To ensure community voices are heard during the planning, design, and construction processes of the FWW Project, the County, City, and Chamber all commit to the following:



- **Convene a CAB** made up of representatives from community organizations from the project area and region. These board members will meet quarterly to receive frequent updates on the Project's process directly from the County with the expectation that that information will be conveyed to members of their respective community organizations. The CAB will help lead the development of a CPP, which will guide all outreach processes to ensure that engagement is meaningful and authentic and that community input received is captured in the decisions made throughout project design and implementation.
- **Host frequent outreach events with local community organizations** to capture Cincinnati's unique local cultures and community organizations can inform placemaking decisions. This outreach has already begun, as well, with the project partners' meeting with the Downtown Residents Council to share about the Project and gain support.
- **Implement a full suite of engagement tools** that have been used effectively on other high-profile projects. This is expected to include frequent and targeted social media posts, website hosted project materials, in-person and online open house events, online design preference surveys, stakeholder meetings, focus groups, earned media, and unearned (paid) media.

8. Innovation

Highway Cap Using Innovative Project Delivery

The FWW Project showcases innovation in its creation of civic space over top of a major interstate highway, which bisects downtown Cincinnati and the Banks. Bringing this underutilized space into a higher and better use to not only reconnect downtown and the riverfront but also create a new regional destination for all Cincinnatians to enjoy.

Cincinnati and Hamilton County leaders were ahead of their time and had a long-term, innovative vision when the

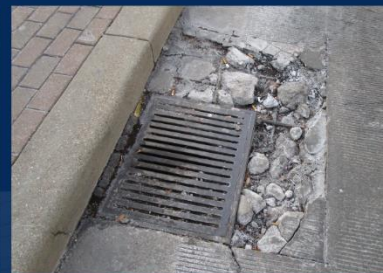


Figure 10. Visualization of completed Phase 1 FWW Project

reconfiguration of FWW was planned in the late 1990s and constructed in the early-2000s. At that time, there was forethought by the County, City, and private sector partners about future use of the space above the highway. As part of the FWW reconstruction, additional foundation pilings were built with the intention of one day using them to support an elevated highway cap, as envisioned in **the 2000 Central Riverfront Urban Design Master Plan**. The entirety of the \$10 million dollar cost for the design and construction of the pilings was privately raised. That investment is equivalent to more than \$17 million today, when adjusted for inflation.

While the full funding to construct the cap was not available at that time, the hope was that this long-term, visionary investment would one day help spur the reconnection of the CBD and The Banks. With the foundation pilings already in place and ready to be used, the FWW Project will be less costly to build and delivery of the project can move forward quicker and with less disruption to ongoing operations of the highway.

FORT WASHINGTON WAY PROJECT: A Strategic Infrastructure Investment for Economic Growth



PROJECT READINESS

FEBRUARY 2026

Submitted for FY 2026 Better Utilizing Investments to
Leverage Development (BUILD) Grant Program



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PROJECT READINESS

Hamilton County, Ohio is requesting \$25 million in Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) Grant Program funding to be matched by \$25 million in local funds from Hamilton County (County), the City of Cincinnati (City), and the Cincinnati USA Regional Chamber (Cincinnati Chamber), among others to fully fund all preliminary design, environmental documentation, final design, and construction associated with Phase 1 of the **Fort Washington Way Project: A Strategic Infrastructure Investment for Economic Growth** (hereafter referred to as the FWW Project).

If successfully funded, the County and its partners will be able to realize the vision, 30 years in the making, of reconnecting Cincinnati's **Central Business District (CBD)** to **The Banks Riverfront District** (The Banks) by providing a 1.2-acre highway cap and plaza over the eight-lane divided sunken highway which carries Interstate 71 (I-71) /U.S. Route 50 and is locally known as Fort Washington Way (FWW). The FWW Project will also reconfigure surface streets to improve access, mobility, and revitalize development in this economically significant region.

1. Planning and Constructability

The FWW Project is technically feasible and supported by conceptual engineering and conservative cost estimates. Hamilton County and the City of Cincinnati's dedication to completing the FWW Project is evident in the \$25 million (50%) local match for future eligible activities and an additional \$200,000 previously incurred on conceptual planning (15% design) to advance project delivery.

While not counted as a previously expended cost in the BCA, it is important to recognize that monetary contributions (approximately \$12.5 million in 2026 dollars) from the County, City, and Cincinnati Chamber, used to construct foundational pilings along FWW during the 1996 reconstruction, are evidence of the vital nature of the FWW Project and the dedication to completing its construction. The County anticipates construction to begin in early 2028 and be completed by end of 2029.

STIP / TIP / TTIP / TAM Plan

Both the County and City are active members of the **Intermodal Coordinating Committee (ICC)** for the Ohio Kentucky Indiana Regional Council of Governments (OKI), the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Greater Cincinnati region. The ICC meets monthly and has a formalized process for reviewing projects which need to be incorporated in the region's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and for continuing transportation planning commensurate with the Unified Planning Work Program. The FWW Project is consistent with OKI's Long-Term Transportation Plan and would be added to the region's TIP before funds are awarded. OKI is committed to the FWW Project and has provided a letter of support. The FWW Project will be included in the STIP/TIP upon award notification.



Consistency with Other Plans

Planning for the FWW Project began in earnest over 25 years ago with the creation of the **Central Riverfront Urban Design Master Plan** in 2000. Since then, countless references have been made to this project and its local and regional significance; however, momentum for the Project has been slow in recent years due to a lack of funding availability and budgetary prioritization of other regional priorities.

Property Acquisition / Right-of-Way

The County does not anticipate substantial utility coordination or right-of-way (ROW) activities. All work will be done within the existing ROW.

Construction Techniques and Phasing

Maintenance of Traffic (MOT): Complex projects such as this, with extensive overhead work, have the potential to create traffic delays. The FWW Project will coordinate construction along with the \$3.6B **Brent Spence Bridge (BSB)** project being constructed directly adjacent to the Project. The BSB Project includes multiple planned closures and traffic shifts affecting FWW Project. Advancing the FWW Project concurrently allows construction activities to be aligned with these scheduled closures, minimizing additional disruptions to the traveling public while reducing maintenance-of-traffic complexity and costs. If funding is not secured to advance the FWW Project in coordination with the BSB construction schedule, future implementation would likely require separate lane closures, extended traffic impacts, and significantly higher MOT costs.

Structure Construction: The cap park constructed by the FWW Project would introduce design and construction challenges that could impact project cost and schedule. To mitigate potential impacts, the County will rely heavily on the well-established partnership between the City, County, Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT), and OKI. Coordination with the on-going BSB project will minimize project costs and schedule delays for the FWW Project.

2. Proposed Schedule

The FWW Project schedule is a direct reflection of Hamilton County, the City of Cincinnati, and ODOT's collective effort to expedite the Project's construction. It is anticipated that the Project will complete final design and NEPA by February 2028, will begin construction April 2028, and complete construction by September 2029, in a coordinated effort to open traffic along with the BSB. Figure 1 shows the project schedule.



TASK	2026	2027	2028	2029
Award Announcement				
Addition to STIP/TIP				
Anticipated Grant Obligation				
Final Design and Environmental Review				
NEPA/Permitting				
Construction				

Figure 1. Project Schedule

3. NEPA and Permitting

NEPA Status and Coordination with DOT

The Ohio Department of Transportation has agreed to manage the federal award directly with Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and will leverage its significant experience administering federal highway funding. ODOT will be the grant recipient for FY 26 BUILD funds for the FWW Project and will work with the County and City as subrecipients to deliver all aspects of the project.

ODOT is one of only eight State Department Transportation departments which has NEPA assignment, meaning it has formally assumed responsibility for all environmental laws, rules and orders, interagency consultation for transportation projects in Ohio. As a result, it is anticipated that there would be less regulatory hurdles for proper clearance and a streamlined approval process resulting in an expedited schedule for timely construction. Based on ODOT's Environmental Procedure Manual (EPM), the County anticipates a D1-level NEPA document. A D1 project means it is "Categorically Excluded" in accordance with 23 CFR 771.117c and does not individually or cumulatively have a significant environmental impact. ODOT's EPM also lays out the process for approving environmental documents. Projects with lower levels of impact can be approved by ODOT district offices, which is another factor that will help to minimize time needed for project clearance.

Additionally, the City's Department of Transportation and Engineering (DOTE) currently has a standing quarterly meeting with ODOT to discuss existing and future projects. Once notification of the award occurs, coordination will begin and ODOT will be heavily involved as a major stakeholder and grant administrator. Based on the routine nature of D1 documentation and the ability to be incorporated into the TIP, the County expects timely NEPA clearance within the overall implementation schedule.

Permits and Approvals

Hamilton County and its project partners are dedicated to the successful completion of the FWW Project and anticipate receiving all environmental approvals in advance of grant obligation. To ensure that this environmental milestone is met, the County will coordinate closely with the



ODOT, who have expressed their endorsement via a letter of support for all NEPA documentation necessary to implement the FWW Project.

4. Project Support

Public Engagement

The County, City, Cincinnati Chamber, and ODOT plan to retain a public engagement firm with close ties to the community to develop a robust Community Participation Plan (CPP) that will facilitate meaningful engagement during the design and environmental process. The County, City, Cincinnati Chambers, and ODOT will also form a Community Advisory Board (CAB) to ensure community voices are heard. The CPP will reach hard-to-access community members through culturally appropriate and innovative practices including social media, online and in-person surveys, stakeholder interviews, focus groups, and public open houses. A central focus of the CPP will be to reach community members that live in the several Area of Persistent Poverty and Opportunity Zone census tracts located in close proximity to the FWW Project site and in areas accessible to the site via transit. The CAB will help guide this outreach process to ensure that all engagement is meaningful and authentic.

5. Risks and Mitigation

Throughout design development and environmental review/permitting, the County will continue to identify emerging risks and address them proactively to ensure efficient and effective project delivery. As part of the completed conceptual design work, several potential risks have already been identified, along with corresponding mitigation strategies to reduce their likelihood and impact. The following are risks and mitigations for the FWW Project:

Table 1. Potential Risks and Mitigation Strategies

POTENTIAL RISKS	MITIGATIONS
Right-of-Way	No special right-of-way permits are expected to be required.
Construction Staging	Project implementation will be coordinated with the construction of the \$3.6B Brent Spence Bridge project which would require long-term closures of FWW. This coordination will minimize travel delay due to the FWW Project and improve safety for workers implementing the FWW Project.
Project Costs Exceed Budgeted Costs	The County has a cost estimate not dated beyond a year from the application submittal date and has included escalated costs per year of implementation as well as a 17.5% contingency. The County will bear any additional cost overruns.
Schedule Delays	The County has developed a conservative schedule that includes additional time for unforeseen delays. Furthermore, the County is prepared to obligate the grant in FY 27, which is three years prior to



the statutory requirements for obligation deadline (September 30, 2030) and complete expenditures in FY 30, which is five years prior to the statutory requirements for the expenditure deadline (September 30, 2035).

6. Applicant Capacity Assessment

Roles and Responsibilities

Hamilton County and the City of Cincinnati maintain a full complement of professional engineering and technical staff, including design, construction, and project engineers, whose primary responsibilities focus on the planning, design, construction, operation, and maintenance of the regional roadway system. These internal resources provide substantial technical expertise related to roadway design standards, cost estimating, constructability, and project delivery. The County and the City have extensive experience managing and completing complex projects. Most relevant is the complex buildout of the Banks Riverfront District and Metro Intermodal Transit Facility. Not only were these projects transformational, as the FWW will be, but they were also multifaceted and involved funding from several distinct sources.

The three phases of development needed to execute the Banks cost over \$70 million dollars. Project funding came from several federal sources including FTA, EDA, CMAQ, ARPA, and STP.

Federal Regulations

The County confirms that the Project will comply with all applicable Federal requirements, including Buy America provisions, Americans with Disabilities Act, Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Act, Davis Bacon Act, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 49 CFR Part 21 (Department of Transportation Regulations for the Implementation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964), Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards (FMVSS), and the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations (FMCSR), and related statutes and regulations.

Project Planning

As noted above under section 1. Planning and Constructability, Inclusion in STIP and Consistency with Other Plans, the FWW Project is in alignment with State and local transportation improvement plans; and upon award of the federal funds will be added to OKI's TIP.

Project Delivery

Hamilton County has significant experience working with federal agencies, specifically FHWA, on project scoping, development, and implementation. ODOT, the County, and their partners have received and managed the award of numerous USDOT discretionary grants. The final design, as an outcome of project planning and design, will be advanced to begin construction in Spring 2028 and will conform to all current USDOT, American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), and ODOT standards for roadway design and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant pedestrian infrastructure.

FORT WASHINGTON WAY PROJECT: A Strategic Infrastructure Investment for Economic Growth



BENEFIT COST ANALYSIS

FEBRUARY 2026

Submitted for FY 2026 Better Utilizing Investments to
Leverage Development (BUILD) Grant Program



Executive Summary

A benefit-cost analysis (BCA) was conducted for the **Fort Washington Way Project: A Strategic Infrastructure Investment for Economic Growth** (“the FWW Project”) for submission to the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) as a requirement for the FY 2026 Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) grant program. The analysis was conducted in accordance with the benefit-cost methodology as outlined by USDOT in the Benefit-Cost Analysis Guidance for Discretionary Grant Programs, released in December 2025. The 26-year period of analysis includes 6 total years of design and construction (2024-2029) and 20 years of benefits (2030-2049).

Hamilton County, Ohio is requesting \$25 million in Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 BUILD funding to be matched by \$25 million in local funds from Hamilton County (County), the City of Cincinnati (City), and the Cincinnati Regional Chamber (Cincinnati Chamber), among others to fully fund all preliminary design, environmental documentation, final design, and construction associated with Phase 1 of the Project.

If successfully funded, the County and its partners will be able to realize the vision, 30 years in the making, of reconnecting Cincinnati’s [Central Business District](#) (CBD) to [The Banks Riverfront District](#) (The Banks) by providing a 1.2-acre highway cap and plaza over the eight-lane divided sunken highway which carries Interstate 71 (I-71) /U.S. Route 50, known locally known as Fort Washington Way (FWW). The Project will also reconfigure local surface streets to improve safety, access, and mobility, and revitalize development in this economically significant region.



Figure ES-1: Project Location and Phases

Once constructed this project will provide the following benefits:

- Create 1.2 acres of new space in the heart of Cincinnati’s CBD, providing an amenity to the area while also capturing stormwater.
- Improve safety for motorists and non-motorists traveling between the CBD and The Banks through improving four intersections that make travel safer for all roadway users.
- Improve transportation connections, including access to the Cincinnati Streetcar and the Riverfront Transit Center, and between The Banks and downtown Cincinnati.
- Increase adjacent property values and present an opportunity to spur \$875 million of mixed-use development and housing in an Opportunity Zone.



In addition to funding all engagement, final design, and environmental work for Phase 1 and 30% design plans and environmental work for the full build out, the Project scope will include the following physical elements:

- Construct an elevated 1.2-acre cap structure over FWW between Vine Street and Walnut Street to revitalize economic development in Cincinnati's premier CBD
- Design and construct necessary elements for all interior Tunnel Operating Systems to maintain compatibility with full build-out during Phase 2. These may include tunnel ventilation, fire protection, electrical systems, roadway lighting, safety features, among others
- Remove and replace bridges at Walnut Street ([NBI ID 3106314](#)) and Vine Street ([NBI ID 3106209](#)) to address current issues related to leaking box beams, icicles on bridges, settlement at approach slabs and streetcar tracks, erosion of backfill, damaged pedestrian fencing, leakage into the Central Riverfront Transit Center, drainage damage from large planters, membrane overlay deterioration, and widespread concrete curb damage
- Construct multimodal improvements and traffic safety countermeasures along surface roads and intersections within the project area.

Costs

Future capital costs for the Project are expected to total \$50.0 million in year-of-expenditure (YOE) dollars, as reflected in the narrative. In 2024 dollars, as used in this analysis, this equals \$42.9 million before discounting. In addition to the future costs, approximately \$200,000 has already been spent on conceptual design or will be spent this year. Together, all costs total approximately \$31.5 million in discounted 2024 dollars, using a 7.0 percent real discount rate. See Table ES-1 for the project costs broken out by category and year.

Table ES-1: Project Costs by Category and Year, in Millions of 2024 Dollars

Category	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	Total
Conceptual Design / Previously Incurred Expenses	\$0.08	\$0.02	\$0.00	\$0.09	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.11
Design/Environmental	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$4.52	\$0.41	\$0.00	\$4.93
Structural Construction	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$2.71	\$10.84	\$13.55
Tunnel Systems Construction	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$1.49	\$5.98	\$7.47
Street Safety Improvements Construction	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.51	\$2.04	\$2.55
Civic and Streetscape Construction	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$1.35	\$5.40	\$6.75
Construction Contingency	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$1.48	\$5.93	\$7.41
Total	\$0.08	\$0.02	\$0.00	\$0.09	\$4.52	\$7.96	\$30.18	\$42.86
Total, Discounted 7%	\$0.09	\$0.02	\$0.00	\$0.08	\$3.69	\$6.07	\$21.52	\$31.47

Source: City of Cincinnati Department of Transportation and Engineering (DOTE)



Benefits

In 2024 dollars, the Project is expected to generate \$57.9 million in discounted benefits. When compared to discounted costs of \$31.5 million, this results in a Net Present Value (NPV) of \$26.4 million and a benefit-cost ratio (BCR) of 1.84 as summarized in Table ES-2. This BCA quantified benefits using the latest Project information and available data. Many other economic benefits, including reduced community exposure to noise and emissions from the Interstate, are not quantified in the absence of detailed data. While these benefits would further increase the benefit-cost ratio, they are discussed qualitatively within the BCA.

Table ES-2: Benefit-Cost Analysis Results

Key Financial Metrics	Undiscounted	Discounted (7%)
Total Benefits (2024\$M)	\$153.00	\$57.92
Total Costs (2024\$M)	\$42.86	\$31.47
Net Present Value (2024\$M)	\$110.14	\$26.44
Benefit-Cost Ratio	3.57	1.84

Source: WSP Analysis 2026

The overall project benefit matrix for the Project can be seen in Table ES - 3.

Table ES-3: Project Impacts and Benefits Summary, Millions of 2024 Dollars

Current Status & Problem to be Addressed	Change to Baseline	Outcome Criteria	Economic Benefit	Summary of Results (at 7% disc. rate)	Page Reference
FWW currently acts as a barrier between Cincinnati's CBD and The Banks riverfront district. The open space over the highway presents a significant barrier to access, mobility, and economic development between two high-activity economic areas.	The Project will provide approximately four acres of open green space and up to 1.2 acres of plaza space over FWW. It will design and construct the highway cap structure, integrated tunnel safety systems below, and a vibrant civic space above – all supported by the structural pilings included during the original reconstruction of FWW. This continued investment will create a regional civic space that reconnects the CBD to the riverfront while also replacing existing infrastructure to ensure a long-term state of good repair along FWW for decades to come.	Safety	Improved Roadway Safety	\$32.5 M	p. 9
		Environmental Sustainability	Natural Infrastructure	\$0.7 M	p. 12
		Quality of Life	Civic Space Amenity Value	\$30.1 M	p. 13
			Health – Mortality Reduction	\$9.6 M	p. 14
		Mobility and Community Connectivity	Pedestrian Facility Improvements	\$10.1 M	p. 15
			Cycling Facility Improvements	\$0.8 M	p. 16
		Economic Competitiveness and Opportunity	Repurposed Right-of-Way Travel Time	\$0.9 M -\$25.0 M	p. 18 p. 18
		State of Good Repair	Change in O&M Costs	-\$1.9 M	p. 19

Source: WSP Analysis 2026



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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 BCA Framework

A benefit-cost analysis (BCA) is an evaluation framework to assess the economic advantages (benefits) and disadvantages (costs) of an investment alternative. Benefits and costs are broadly defined and are quantified in monetary terms to the extent possible. The overall goal of a BCA is to assess whether the expected benefits of a project justify the costs from a national perspective. A BCA framework attempts to capture the net welfare change created by a project, including cost savings and increases in welfare (benefits), as well as disbenefits where costs can be identified (e.g., project capital costs), and welfare reductions where some groups are expected to be made worse off as a result of the proposed project.

The BCA framework involves defining a Base or “No-Build” Case, which is compared to the “Build” Case, where the grant request is awarded, and the project is built as proposed. The BCA assesses the incremental difference between the No-Build Case and the Build Case, which represents the net change in welfare. BCAs are forward-looking exercises which seek to assess the incremental change in welfare over a project lifecycle. The importance of future welfare changes is determined through discounting, which is meant to reflect both the opportunity cost of capital as well as the societal preference for the present.

The analysis was conducted in accordance with the benefit-cost methodology as recommended by USDOT in the Benefit-Cost Analysis Guidance for Discretionary Grant Programs from December 2025.¹ This methodology includes the following analytical assumptions:

- Defining existing and future conditions under a No-Build Case and under the Build Case;
- Estimating benefits and costs during project construction and operation, including 20 years of operations beyond the Project completion when benefits accrue;
- Using USDOT recommended monetized values for reduced injuries/crashes, mortality reduction, and pedestrian and cycling amenities, while relying on best practices for monetization of other benefits;
- Presenting dollar values in real 2024 dollars. In instances where cost estimates and benefits valuations are expressed in historical or future dollar years, using an appropriate inflation factor to adjust the values; and
- Discounting future benefits and costs with a real discount rate of 7.0 percent.

¹ U.S. Department of Transportation. Benefit-Cost Analysis Guidance for Discretionary Grant Programs. December 2025.

<https://www.transportation.gov/mission/office-secretary/office-policy/transportation-policy/benefit-cost-analysis-guidance>



The BCA produces several important measures to assess the cost-effectiveness of the proposed Project. The benefit-cost ratio (BCR), calculated by dividing the Project's discounted societal benefits by its discounted Project capital costs, measures the societal return on each dollar spent in Project costs. A BCR of more than 1.0 indicates that for each dollar spent, more than one dollar worth of benefits will be generated by the Project. Another important measure is the net present value (NPV), calculated by subtracting the discounted Project costs from the discounted societal benefits created by the Project. This measure indicates the present value of the net social worth created by the Project, after accounting for its costs.

However, the BCR and NPV only account for benefits that can be successfully quantified and monetized; some benefits generated by a Project may be difficult to quantify or monetize and are therefore excluded from the measures described above. It is important that the BCR and NPV of a Project be considered in conjunction with other criteria when judging a Project's overall worth.

1.2 Report Contents

This report provides technical information on the BCA conducted in support of the Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) application for the Bridging the Gap: Capping Fort Washington Way Project ("the Project"). The report is structured as follows:

- **Section 2 - Project Overview** contains a description of the Project, information on the general assumptions made in the analysis, and a description of the No-Build and Build scenarios;
- **Section 3 - Project Costs** provides a summary of the anticipated capital and operations and maintenance costs;
- **Section 4 - Demand Projections** describes the estimation of future users of the new infrastructure.
- **Section 5 - Project Benefits** reviews the expected economic benefits the Project would generate, including a review of the assumptions and methodology used to calculate the benefits; and
- **Section 6 - Summary of Results** reports the high-level results of the BCA.
- **Section 7 - Sensitivity Analysis** provides results of the sensitivity analysis that evaluates the different assumptions and the impact that the variability of those assumptions may have on the overall Project.



2 PROJECT OVERVIEW

2.1 Description

Hamilton County, Ohio is requesting \$25 million in Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 BUILD funding to be matched by \$25 million in local funds from Hamilton County (County), the City of Cincinnati (City), and the Cincinnati Regional Chamber (Cincinnati Chamber), among others to fully fund all preliminary design, environmental documentation, final design, and construction associated with Phase 1 of the Project.

If successfully funded, the County and its partners will be able to realize the vision, 30 years in the making, of reconnecting Cincinnati's [Central Business District](#) (CBD) to [The Banks Riverfront District](#) (The Banks) by providing a 1.2-acre highway cap and plaza over the eight-lane divided sunken highway which carries Interstate 71 (I-71) /U.S. Route 50, known locally known as Fort Washington Way (FWW). The Project will also reconfigure local surface streets to improve access, mobility, and revitalize development in this economically significant region.



Figure 2-1: Project Location and Phases

Once constructed this project will provide the following benefits:

- Create 1.2 acres of new space in the heart of Cincinnati's CBD, providing an amenity to the area while also capturing stormwater.
- Improve safety for motorists and non-motorists traveling between the CBD and The Banks through improving four intersections that make travel safer for all roadway users.
- Improve transportation connections, including access to the Cincinnati Streetcar and the Riverfront Transit Center, and between The Banks and downtown Cincinnati.
- Increase adjacent property values and present an opportunity to spur \$875 million of mixed-use development and housing in an Opportunity Zone.

In addition to funding all engagement, final design, and environmental work for Phase 1 and 30 percent design plans and environmental work for the full build out, the Project scope will include the following physical elements:

- Construct an elevated 1.2-acre cap structure over FWW between Vine Street and Walnut Street to revitalize economic development in Cincinnati's premier CBD



- Design and construct necessary elements for all interior Tunnel Operating Systems to maintain compatibility with full build-out during Phase 2. These may include tunnel ventilation, fire protection, electrical systems, roadway lighting, safety features, among others
- Remove and replace bridges at Walnut Street ([NBI ID 3106314](#)) and Vine Street ([NBI ID 3106209](#)) to address current issues related to leaking box beams, icicles on bridges, settlement at approach slabs and streetcar tracks, erosion of backfill, damaged pedestrian fencing, leakage into the Central Riverfront Transit Center, drainage damage from large planters, membrane overlay deterioration, and widespread concrete curb damage
- Construct multimodal improvements and traffic safety countermeasures along surface roads and intersections within the project area.

2.2 General Assumptions

The BCA makes several important assumptions and seeks to avoid overestimation of benefits and underestimation of costs. Specifically, the assumptions include:

- The period of analysis corresponds to 26 years and includes 6 total years of design and construction (2024-2029) and 20 years of benefits (2030-2049);
- Dollar figures in this analysis are expressed in constant 2024 dollars (2024\$);
- The real discount rate of 7.0 percent consistent with USDOT guidance from December 2025; and
- Unless specified otherwise, the results shown in this document correspond to the effects of the Build scenario.

2.3 No-Build and Build Scenario

Currently, Interstate 71 / U.S. Route 50 (locally known as Fort Washington Way) acts as a barrier between Cincinnati's Central Business District (CBD) and The Banks riverfront district, home to Paycor Stadium, Great American Ball Park, The Brady Music Center, Smale Riverfront Park and the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center. The open space over the highway presents a significant barrier to access, mobility, and economic development between two high-activity economic areas. At the Census Tract level, the project site is within Census Tract 265, which is also identified as an Area of Persistent Poverty and an Opportunity Zone.

In the Build scenario, the Project will construct:

- **Tunnel and Cap Structure:** The cap structures needed to cover FWW will be of modular adjacent prestressed concrete box beam construction, made continuous for live load. Piers will be cast-in-place walls, and existing openings in piers at bridges will have new walls installed with fire rated emergency doors at designated intervals to provide safe passage to the tunnel not affected by fire in the event of an accident. There will be no impact to the existing roadway design of FWW, which will not be altered as part of the project. The cap



will be designed and constructed to accommodate future ventilation requirements which would be needed as part of a future Phase 2.

- **Civic Space:** The Project will provide approximately 1.2 acres of open green space and civic plaza space. While the final design of these spaces will be determined via a public engagement process, the civic space is expected to include a 48,800 sq. ft. event lawn complete with soil, grass, drainage, watering system, and electrical power; a 4,400 sq. ft. civic plaza adjacent to the event lawn equipped with concrete pavers, seating walls, planters, and ornamental landscaping; and approximately 53 trees spread throughout.
- **Street Safety Improvements:** The Project includes streetscape and street safety improvements along 2nd Street, 3rd Street, Vine Street, and Walnut Street. Both 2nd Street and 3rd Street currently operate as one-way pairs, each with five travel lanes. As part of the project, the City will redesign each street to include traffic calming measures and pedestrian safety improvements such as curb bump-outs, high visibility crosswalks, accessible pedestrian signals (APS), leading pedestrian intervals, and landscaping treatments. Also included in these improvements will be a new one-mile, two-way protected bike lane, either along 2nd Street or 3rd Street, as well as along Elm Street and Broadway Street to connect into the CROWN regional trail network.

This continued investment will create a regional civic space that reconnects the CBD to the riverfront while enhancing safety and spurring economic development.

Under the No-Build scenario, the infrastructure will remain as it is, without these improvements.

3 PROJECT COSTS

3.1 Capital Costs

Future capital costs for the Project are expected to total \$50 million in year-of-expenditure (YOE) dollars, as reflected in the narrative. In 2024 dollars, as used in this analysis, this equals \$42.9 million before discounting. In addition to the future costs, approximately \$200,000 has already been spent on conceptual design or will be spent this year. Together, all costs total approximately \$31.5 million in discounted 2024 dollars, using a 7.0 percent real discount rate. See Table 3-1 for the project costs broken out by category and year.

Table 3-1: Project Costs by Category and Year, in Millions of Undiscounted 2025 Dollars

Category	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	Total
Conceptual Design / Previously Incurred Expenses	\$0.08	\$0.02	\$0.00	\$0.09	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.11
Design/Environmental	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$4.52	\$0.41	\$0.00	\$4.93
Structural Construction	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$2.71	\$10.84	\$13.55
Tunnel Systems Construction	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$1.49	\$5.98	\$7.47



Category	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	Total
Street Safety Improvements Construction	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.51	\$2.04	\$2.55
Civic and Streetscape Construction	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$1.35	\$5.40	\$6.75
Construction Contingency	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$1.48	\$5.93	\$7.41
Total	\$0.08	\$0.02	\$0.00	\$0.09	\$4.52	\$7.96	\$30.18	\$42.86
Total, Discounted 7%	\$0.09	\$0.02	\$0.00	\$0.08	\$3.69	\$6.07	\$21.52	\$31.47

Source: City of Cincinnati Department of Transportation and Engineering (DOTE)

3.2 Operating and Maintenance Costs

Operating and maintenance (O&M) of the new civic area and surrounding infrastructure are expected to cost more than the current infrastructure. In the absence of detailed O&M cost estimates for the Project, this analysis assumes annual O&M costs similar to those at Klyde Warren Park in Dallas, which serves as an inspiration for this project, scaled for the smaller size of the FWW civic space and benchmarked against the operations of similarly sized and situated Cincinnati spaces. This results in estimated annual O&M costs of \$250,000 in undiscounted 2024 dollars, equaling \$5.0 million over the 20-year analysis period, or \$1.9 million in present value when discounted using a 7.0 percent rate. These costs are included as a disbenefit in the numerator of the BCR calculation, per USDOT guidance. Table 3-2 summarizes the assumptions used to calculate O&M costs, while Table 3-3 provides the results.

Table 3-2: Operating and Maintenance Cost Assumptions

Variable	Unit	Value	Source
Operations, Maintenance & Capital Improvements Costs for comparable project	2024\$ per year	\$1,104,625	Klyde Warren Park/ Dallas Arts District PID Budget
Size of comparable project	acres	5.40	https://www.klydewarrenpark.org/our-story
New Cap Size (civic space)	acres	1.22	KZF Design Estimate
Estimated FWW O&M Cost	2024\$ per year	\$249,938	calculation based on Klyde Warren O&M Costs and relative size of FWW

Table 3-3: Operating and Maintenance Costs

Benefit	Undiscounted (Millions of 2024\$)	Discounted (Millions of 2024\$)
O&M Costs	-\$5.00	-\$1.89

Source: WSP Analysis 2026



4 DEMAND PROJECTIONS

Portions of this analysis depend on future vehicle, pedestrian and cyclist travel volumes. Vehicular estimates are based on Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) traffic counts for 2nd and 3rd Streets in or near the project area. Pedestrian and cyclist volumes were collected using Replica, an enterprise data platform providing detailed insights into the built environment, transportation, and economic activity.² The analysis uses a weighted average of Thursday and Saturday volumes to estimate typical pedestrian and cyclist volumes.

Additionally, all traffic is assumed to grow at 0.2 percent per year, in line with projected population growth for the region, and is multiplied by an annualization factor of 365 days.

Table 4-1: Project Demand Assumptions

Variable	Unit	Value	Source
AADT, 2nd + 3rd St, 2025	AADT	23,195	ODOT Traffic Count Data Viewer , IDs 173199 and 35331
Truck AADT, 2nd + 3rd St, 2025	AADT	872	
Average Daily Pedestrian Count	trips per day	1,879	Replica Midwest Model for Thursday and Saturday in Spring 2025
Average Daily Bike Count	trips per day	71	
2020 population, OKI Region	population	2,120,721	OKI 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan Update, 2020 to 2050 Population Projections
2050 population, OKI Region	population	2,254,878	
Population annual growth rate	percent	0.20%	Calculation
Annualization Factor	days per year	365	Known
Induced Pedestrian Demand	percent	12.8%	Longo, A., Hutchinson, W. G., Hunter, R. F., Tully, M. A., & Kee, F. (2015). Demand response to improved walking infrastructure: A study into the economics of walking and health behaviour change. Social Science & Medicine, 143, 107-116.
Induced Cycling Demand	percent	60%	Fosgerau et al. "Bikeability and the induced demand for cycling." Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, Vol 120, December 6, 2022.

² Replica, [Studio Platform](#).



Variable	Unit	Value	Source
Annual visitors to FWW Civic Space, Year 1	annual visitors	294,145	Calculation (see Section 5.3.1)
Induced Pedestrian Trips from Civic Space	percent	41%	Calculation based on National Recreation and Park Association, 2025 Engagement with Parks Report.
Induced Cycling Trips from Civic Space	percent	12%	

In the Build scenario, active transportation trips are anticipated to be higher, due to induced trips from the new pedestrian and cyclist infrastructure, and from the visitors to the new civic space. Studies have shown that pedestrian and cycling infrastructure improvements result in 12.8 percent and 60 percent increases in respective trips. In addition, as described in greater detail in Section 5.3.1, the new civic space is expected to attract nearly 300,000 visitors in its opening year. A 2025 report from the National Recreation and Park Association highlights that more than 50 percent of typical recreation facility visitors travel there on foot (41 percent) or bicycle (12 percent). These values are applied to the annual No-Build pedestrian and cyclist values to estimate the additional users in the Build scenario, reflected in Table 4-2.

Table 4-2: Demand Projections

Mode	Scenario	Year 1 (2030)	Year 20 (2049)	Total
Automobile Trips	No-Build	8,231,783	8,557,868	167,876,509
	Build	8,231,783	8,557,868	167,876,509
	Induced Trips	-	-	-
Truck Trips	No-Build	321,388	334,119	6,554,297
	Build	321,388	334,119	6,554,297
	Induced Trips	-	-	-
Pedestrian Trips	No-Build	692,935	720,384	14,131,511
	Build	901,307	937,011	18,380,992
	Induced Trips	208,372	216,626	4,249,481
Cycling Trips	No-Build	26,076	27,109	531,785
	Build	77,769	80,849	1,585,991
	Induced Trips	51,693	53,740	1,054,206

Source: WSP Analysis 2026

The pedestrian and cycling trips are used in the calculation of benefits from pedestrian and cycling facility improvements (Section 5.4.1 and 5.4.2) as well as from mortality reduction (Section 5.3.2). The automobile and truck trips are used to calculate the change in travel time from the project (Section 5.5.2).



5 PROJECT BENEFITS

The Project generates benefits primarily by:

- **Improving Safety for All** through improving four intersections with safety measures such as curb bump-outs, new crosswalks, modernized APS, leading pedestrian intervals, and adding one-mile of separated two-way bike lane;
- **Introducing Natural Infrastructure** in the form of green space and trees, thereby reducing stormwater runoff and urban heat retention;
- **Providing Civic Space** as a new amenity to the community, promoting economic development in the area;
- **Enhancing public health** by inducing new pedestrian and cycling trips; and
- **Improving transportation amenities and connections**, including access to the Cincinnati Streetcar, the Riverfront Transit Center, and the planned Metro Rapid bus rapid transit system, and between the riverfront and downtown Cincinnati.

The following sub-sections provide the assumptions used to calculate benefits as well as the monetized and quantified benefits for each of the applicable merit criteria. Benefit estimates reflect the variance between the No-Build and Build scenario, where positive benefits reflect Project improvements compared to the No-Build scenario. Benefits that were not quantified or monetized due to lack of methodology or data are described qualitatively in this report.

5.1 Safety

FWW is a depressed highway through downtown Cincinnati that carries personal and commercial vehicles into and out of the central business district (CBD). While existing bridges across FWW allow for vehicular and pedestrian crossing of the highway, the local streets which run at street-level adjacent to FWW – 2nd Street and 3rd Street – have long pedestrian crossing distances (in excess of 60 feet) across five lanes of vehicular traffic. The existing design of these streets poses a significant barrier to safe mobility for people moving between downtown and the riverfront. With existing traffic volumes of more than 23,000 vehicles per day, vehicular lane reductions for new bicycle and pedestrian safety elements will improve safety by slowing traffic speeds.

In the project area, there were 343 documented crashes between 2021 and 2025 - 10 of which involved pedestrians or bicyclists – and resulted in a total of 107 injuries, including two serious injuries, as shown below in Table 5-1. Both serious injuries were experienced by pedestrians.

The Project proposes to right-size and redesign 2nd Street and 3rd Street to improve safety and increase accessibility. Pedestrian improvements at four intersections will include traffic calming and pedestrian safety measures, such as adding curb bump-outs, new high-visibility crosswalks, modernized APS, and leading pedestrian intervals. These improvements will help manage vehicular speeds and provide positive safety improvements, including reducing crossing distances,



giving pedestrians the priority over turning vehicles, enhancing safety for people with visual impairment through audible crossing cues, and enhancing the visibility of people using crosswalks.

The Project will also add a two-way protected bike facility along either 2nd Street or 3rd Street, as well as Elm Street and Broadway, which would provide a direct connection between the Project's civic green space and the City's proposed downtown bike network. The facility would include bicycle traffic signals, barrier protection of some type (concrete curb and/or bollards), and painted bike lane markings along the corridor and at intersections.

Table 5-1 shows the injuries by level of severity and section of the project area. The crashes were divided into three sections based on the primary types of improvements being made:

1. **Pedestrian Intersection Improvements Area**, in the square block bounded by Walnut, Vine, 2nd, and 3rd streets. All crashes on Vine and Walnut streets were included in this section, as well as pedestrian-involved crashes on 2nd and 3rd between Walnut and Vine streets. Bicycle and vehicle crashes on 2nd and 3rd streets were excluded from this section to avoid duplication.
2. **Bike Lane Improvements Area**, along Elm Street from the Ohio River Trail to 3rd Street, Broadway from the Ohio River Trail to 3rd Street, and 2nd and 3rd streets between Elm Street and Broadway. Because the bike lane will only be added to 2nd or 3rd street (to be determined as part of final design), the bicycle and vehicle crashes in this area were averaged together to arrive at the crashes subject to this analysis. Pedestrian crashes on 2nd and 3rd streets between Vine and Walnut streets were excluded from this section to avoid duplication.
3. **Traffic Calming Improvements Area**, reflecting the same average crashes as the Bike Lane Improvements area, based on the assumption that whichever street does not receive a bike lane will still have other traffic calming measures implemented.

Table 5-1: Project Area Crash History, 2021-2025

Severity Level	Metric	Pedestrian Intersection Improvements Area	Bike Lane Improvements Area	Traffic Calming Improvement Area	Total
Serious Injury	Crashes	2	2	2	6
	Injuries	2	2	2	6
Minor Injury	Crashes	14	30	30	73
	Injuries	17	45	45	106
Injury Possible	Crashes	6	25	25	55
	Injuries	9	32	32	72
PDO/No Injury	Crashes	45	205	205	455
	Persons with No Injury	110	519	519	1,147
Total	Crashes	67	261	261	589
	Injuries	28	78	78	184

Source: WSP Analysis of ODOT's Crash Analysis Module Tool



This BCA quantifies and monetizes the benefits of the safety countermeasures on these crashes.

Crashes in the No-Build scenario were estimated by dividing the 2021-2025 crashes by 5 to derive the average annual crashes and growing these levels by 0.2 percent each year to account for projected population/AADT growth (as further described in Section 4).

Crashes in the Build scenario were estimated by multiplying the annual No-Build crashes by the appropriate crash modification factor (CMF) for each group of crashes. As reflected in Table 5-2, the calculation for the pedestrian intersection improvements area uses a CMF for modifying a signal phasing by implementing a leading pedestrian interval, while the crashes in the bike lane improvements area are reduced using a CMF for installing a separated bike lane, and the crashes in the traffic calming improvements area leverage a CMF for traffic calming.

Table 5-2: Safety Benefit Assumptions

Variable	Unit	Value	Source
AADT annual growth rate	percent	0.20%	Calculation based on OKI 2020 to 2050 Population Projections
CMF for Vine/Walnut/2nd/3rd Intersection Improvements	factor	0.413	CMF Clearinghouse, CMF 9903: Modify Signal Phasing (Implement a Leading Pedestrian Interval)
CMF for Added Bike Lane on Elm, Broadway, and 2nd or 3rd Streets	factor	0.552	CMF Clearinghouse, CMF 11552: Install Separated Bike Lane
CMF for Traffic Calming on Elm, Broadway, and 2nd or 3rd Streets	factor	0.680	CMF Clearinghouse, CMF 128: Traffic calming for minor collector road
Cost per Incapacitating Injury	2024\$/injury	\$1,302,300	US DOT BCA Guidance for Discretionary Grant Programs, December 2025, Table A-1
Cost per Non-incapacitating Injury	2024\$/injury	\$256,300	
Cost per Possible Injury	2024\$/injury	\$122,400	
Cost per No Injury	2024\$/injury	\$5,500	

Resulting reductions in crashes were multiplied by average injury costs (shown in Table 5-2) by severity to obtain benefit estimates. Overall, the Project's lifecycle vehicle crash reduction benefits amount to \$32.5 million in discounted 2024 dollars, as shown in Table 5-3.



Table 5-3: Safety Benefits

Benefit	Reduction in Injuries/ Crashes (2031-2050)	Undiscounted (2024 \$M)	Discounted (2024 \$M)
Reduced Incapacitating Injuries	8.56	\$14.54	\$5.47
Reduced Non-incapacitating Injuries	123.77	\$46.63	\$17.53
Reduced Possible Injuries	82.10	\$14.87	\$5.59
No Injury Crashes	516.16	\$10.49	\$3.94
Total Safety Benefits	730.60	\$86.53	\$32.53

Source: WSP Analysis 2026

5.2 Environmental Sustainability

By creating civic space above FWW and enhancing non-motorized transportation options, the Project is expected to provide environmental benefits within the project area, including reduction in stormwater runoff, urban heat retention, and emissions.

The 1.12 acres of lawn space will function as a green roof, capturing stormwater that under the No-Build scenario would instead be funneled into the highway drainage system and then directed into local waterways, both of which can be overwhelmed during heavy rain events. Trees within the civic space will likewise provide stormwater retention benefits as well as heat risk reduction, carbon sequestration, removal of air pollutants, animal habitat, and more. FEMA provides monetary values for urban trees and green roofs, shown in Table 5-4, which this BCA uses to monetize the value of these project components.

Table 5-4: Natural Infrastructure Benefit Assumptions

Variable	Unit	Value	Source
Civic space lawn size	square feet	48,848	KZF Design Estimate
	acres	1.12	
Shade trees planted	number	53	FEMA Economic Benefit Values for Green Infrastructure
Value per acre of green roof	2021\$/acre	\$17,617	
Value per shade tree planted	2021\$/tree	\$1,055	
Inflation adjustment - 2021\$ → 2024\$	factor	1.14	USDOT BCA Guidance December 2025 Table A-7

Over the first 20 years after project completion, the value of the new space's context-appropriate, natural infrastructure is expected to total \$0.7 million in present value, as shown in Table 5-5. These benefits do not count additional emissions reduction anticipated by a portion of new pedestrian and cyclist trips replacing trips previously taken by motorized vehicles.



Table 5-5: Natural Infrastructure Benefits, Millions of 2024 Dollars

Benefit	Undiscounted	Discounted
New Shade Trees	\$1.28	\$0.48
New Lawn Space	\$0.45	\$0.17
Total New Natural Infrastructure	\$1.73	\$0.65

Source: WSP Analysis 2026

5.3 Quality of Life

5.3.1 IMPROVING THE TRAVEL EXPERIENCE FOR FAMILIES

The capping of FWW with a new lid will provide an important amenity to the surrounding community and visitors. Civic space over lids provides significant value, but this can be difficult to measure. Two approaches to measuring this value are via the willingness of people to pay for similar public natural spaces and via the impact that this natural space has on nearby property values. This analysis includes the former approach with the latter employed as a sensitivity analysis in Section 7.

This analysis relies on the average of two studies of the willingness to pay for urban natural space, resulting in a per person estimated value of \$13.3 in 2024 dollars. It multiplies this value by projected users of the civic space. The analysis estimates future civic space users based on the experience at Klyde Warren Park in Dallas, which the Fort Washington Way civic space is modeled on, adjusted based on the size of the first phase of the civic space. Based on this calculation, there are anticipated to be approximately 294,000 civic space visitors in its first year of operations, growing by the population growth rate of 0.2 percent thereafter. Table 5-6 documents the assumptions utilized in the calculation of civic space amenity value.

Table 5-6: Civic Space Amenity Value Assumptions

Variable	Unit	Value	Source
Annual visitors at Klyde Warren Park	annual visitors	1,300,000	Klyde Warren Park: Our Story
Size of Klyde Warren Park	acres	5.4	
New Cap Size (lawn and plaza space)	square feet	53,223	KZF Design Estimate
	acres	1.22	
Annual visitors to FWW Civic Space, Year 1	annual visitors	294,145	Calculation
Population annual growth	percent	0.2%	Calculation based on OKI 2020 to 2050 Population Projections
Willingness to Pay for Urban Natural Space, Study 1	2019 euros	3.56	Determinants of willingness to pay for urban parks



Variable	Unit	Value	Source
Willingness to Pay for Urban Natural Space, Study 2	2014 euros	12.67	An extension of the Theory of Planned Behavior to predict willingness to pay for the conservation of an urban park
2019 Euro to Dollar conversion factor	factor	1.1199	ExchangeRates.org.uk, Spot Rates for 2019
2014 Euro to Dollar conversion factor	factor	1.3283	ExchangeRates.org.uk, Spot Rates for 2014
2019 to 2024 inflation factor	factor	1.21	USDOT BCA Guidance December 2025 Table A-7
2014 to 2024 inflation factor	factor	1.3	
Willingness to Pay for Urban Natural Space, average value	2024\$	\$13.35	Calculation

The willingness to pay approach to valuation of the civic space amenities results in present value benefits of \$30.1 million, as shown in Table 5-7.

Table 5-7: Civic Space Amenity Value Benefits

Benefit	Undiscounted (2024 \$M)	Discounted (2024 \$M)
Civic Space Amenity Value	\$80.09	\$30.11

Source: WSP Analysis 2026

5.3.2 IMPROVED PUBLIC HEALTH

The addition of new cycling and pedestrian infrastructure and green space within the CBD will help to encourage more healthy activities thereby increasing physical and mental health outcomes of those residing and working downtown, as well as for people who may be visiting for events or leisure.

For the purposes of the BCA, potential health benefits were calculated as mortality reduction benefits coming from improved cardiovascular health and other positive outcomes from using active transportation modes, such as walking or cycling. The BCA multiplied the induced pedestrian and cyclist volumes detailed in Section 4 by assumptions provided by the USDOT BCA Guidance to calculate the number of induced trips that fall within the applicable age range, and further multiplied these trips by the value of mortality reduction per trip to see the benefits that are induced from non-active transportation modes. The benefits of these trips were calculated using the monetization rates shown in Table 5-8.



Table 5-8: Mortality Reduction Benefit Assumptions

Variable	Unit	Value	Source
Assumption of Overall Induced Trips within Applicable Age Range - Walking (20-74)	Percent	68%	USDOT BCA Guidance December 2025 Table A-13
Mortality Reduction Benefit - Walking (ages 20-74)	2024\$/induced trip	\$8.36	
Assumption of Overall Induced Trips within Applicable Age Range - Cycling (20-64)	percent	59%	
Mortality Reduction Benefit - Cycling (ages 20-64)	2024\$/induced trip	\$7.45	
Assumed Proportion of Trips Induced from Non-Active Transportation Modes	percent	89%	

Over the 20-year analysis horizon, the Project is expected to see \$9.6 million in discounted 2024 dollars of benefits in mortality reduction from induced active transportation, as shown in Table 5-9.

Table 5-9: Mortality Reduction Benefits, Millions of 2024 Dollars

Benefit	Undiscounted	Discounted
Mortality Reduction Benefit - Walking	\$25.62	\$8.08
Mortality Reduction Benefit - Cycling	\$9.63	\$1.55
Total Mortality Reduction Benefit	\$35.26	\$9.63

Source: WSP Analysis 2026

5.4 Mobility and Community Connectivity

The Project delivers mobility and connectivity benefits by removing physical transportation barriers, enhancing accessibility through Universal Design, and expanding multimodal access for motorized and nonmotorized users. Located at the center of the region's transportation network, the Project strengthens connections among transit, roadway, bicycle, pedestrian, and intermodal facilities while improving access to more than 73,000 downtown jobs and major civic destinations.

5.4.1 PEDESTRIAN FACILITY IMPROVEMENTS

The Project includes the addition of traffic calming measures and pedestrian safety improvements along 2nd Street, 3rd Street, Vine Street, and Walnut Street, such as curb bump-outs, new crosswalks, modernized APS, leading pedestrian intervals, and landscaping treatments. Together, these improvements are expected to reduce typical traffic speeds along the corridor from approximately 35 miles per hour (mph) to the posted speed limit of 25 mph. Additionally, the project will be improving pedestrian signals and crosswalks that would otherwise fall into a state of disrepair before the Project's opening year. The USDOT-provided values for reducing traffic



speeds by 1 mph, adding marked crosswalks, and adding signals for pedestrian crossings are therefore used to estimate the value of the improved infrastructure.

These reduced values are multiplied by the existing annual pedestrian trips (i.e., pedestrian trips in the No-Build scenario), as detailed in Section 4. The value for induced users is measured similarly, but the “rule of half” is applied, such that these users are calculated to experience only half the benefit. The assumptions used in estimating improved pedestrian facility benefits are shown in Table 5-10.

Table 5-10: Pedestrian Facility Improvement Assumptions

Variable	Unit	Value	Source
Marked-Crosswalk on Roadway with Volumes $\geq 10,000$ Vehicles per Day	2024\$/use	\$0.22	USDOT BCA Guidance December 2025 Table A-8
Signal for Pedestrian Crossing on Roadway with Volumes $\geq 13,000$ Vehicles per Day	2024\$/use	\$0.57	
Reducing Traffic Speed by 1 mph (for speeds ≤ 45 mph)	2024\$/person mile walked/per mph	\$0.10	
Pedestrian Distance Traveled	miles	0.86	
Typical No-Build Speed	mph	35	City of Cincinnati
Target Build Speed	mph	25	

Overall, the Project’s lifecycle pedestrian facility improvements are \$10.1 million in discounted 2024 dollars.

Table 5-11: Pedestrian Facility Improvement Benefits, Millions of 2024 Dollars

Benefit	Undiscounted	Discounted
Pedestrian Improvements	\$26.82	\$10.08

Source: WSP Analysis 2026

5.4.2 CYCLING FACILITY IMPROVEMENTS

The Project will add a two-way protected bike facility along 2nd or 3rd Street, which will improve cyclist safety along the street and provide a connection to trails, bridges, and the Central Parkway protected bike lane. For analysis purposes, this study uses the average distance of the 2nd and 3rd street routes.

The assumptions used in estimating improved cycling facility benefits are shown in Table 5-12. The number of existing cyclists (i.e., cyclists in the No-Build scenario, as detailed in Section 4) is multiplied by the distance of the new bike path and the per-mile value of adding a separated cycling track. The value for induced users is measured similarly, but the “rule of half” is applied, such that these users are calculated to experience only half the benefit. The assumptions used in estimating improved cycling facility benefits are shown in Table 5-12.



Table 5-12: Cycling Facility Improvement Assumptions

Variable	Unit	Value	Source
Bike Path Installation Distance	miles	1.0	Project Information; Google Maps, average of 2nd St and 3rd St routes
Separated Cycle Track Value	2024\$/cycle-mile	\$2.09	USDOT BCA Guidance December 2025 Table A-9

Overall, the Project's cycling facility improvements are \$0.8 million in discounted 2024 dollars.

Table 5-13: Cycling Facility Improvement Benefits, Millions of 2024 Dollars

Benefit	Undiscounted	Discounted
Cycling Facility Improvements	\$2.21	\$0.83

Source: WSP Analysis 2026

5.4.3 ACCESS TO PUBLIC TRANSIT

The Project area sits within the region's primary transit hub and provides direct access to high-frequency, high-ridership services. Within one-quarter mile of the site:

- 36 Cincinnati Metro bus routes are accessible
- Government Square Transit Center (two blocks away) serves as the region's primary bus hub with 4,275 average weekday boardings
- Nine frequent routes operate at 20-minute headways or better
- Metro system ridership grew from 7.5 million trips (2021) to 13.3 million trips (2024) a 77% increase
- Nine local and nine express TANK routes connect Northern Kentucky communities
- The Southbank Shuttle provides 15-minute frequency service to the site
- The Connector streetcar provides free, year-round service and carried nearly 1.2 million trips in 2024, a 9% year-over-year increase

In addition, the Riverfront Transit Center directly adjacent to the Project will serve two planned BRT lines beginning in 2027–2028, each operating at 10-minute frequencies and connecting downtown to the University of Cincinnati, Cincinnati Children's Hospital & Medical Center and other major health systems, and to major residential and employment corridors. Together, these services provide high-capacity, affordable access across the region.

By directly linking high-frequency transit, regional trails, protected bike lanes, pedestrian facilities, and intermodal parking within a compact area, the Project strengthens last-mile connectivity in a multimodal framework. Travelers can efficiently transfer between modes — including bus, BRT, streetcar, bicycle, walking, and personal vehicle — within a short walking distance, expanding practical travel options and improving overall system connectivity.



5.5 Economic Competitiveness and Opportunity

5.5.1 REPURPOSED RIGHT-OF-WAY

The Project will provide approximately 1.2 acres of lawn and plaza space over the Fort Washington Way Interstate. This newly created land, or repurposed right-of-way, presents value to residents through unlocking benefits of recreation, green space, and improved mobility.

Following USDOT guidance for ‘Repurposed Right-of-Way’, this BCA selected comparable land parcels to derive land values per acre for the proposed facility. Smale Riverfront Park, which is located in proximity to the Project along the Ohio River, was selected as a comparable and representative property. Property values for Smale Riverfront Park were provided by the City of Cincinnati Department of Transportation and Engineering (DOTE) based on an analysis of Hamilton County Auditor data.

This benefit was realized in a single year per USDOT guidance, which was the project opening year (2030) for the purposes of this BCA. The assumptions used in estimating repurposed right-of-way are shown in Table 5-14.

Table 5-14: Repurposed Right-of-Way Assumptions

Variable	Unit	Value	Source
Comparable Land Value	2023\$/acre	\$1,090,000	City of Cincinnati Department of Transportation and Engineering (DOTE) Analysis of Hamilton County Auditor data
2023 to 2024 inflation factor	factor	1.02	USDOT BCA Guidance December 2025 Table A-7
New Cap Acreage	acres	1.22	KZF Design Estimate
Year of Value Realization	year	2030	Equal to Project Opening Year

Overall, the Project’s repurposed right-of-way benefits amount to \$0.9 million in discounted 2024 dollars.

Table 5-15: Repurposed Right-of-Way Benefits, Millions of 2024 Dollars

Benefit	Undiscounted	Discounted
Repurposed Right-of-Way	\$1.36	\$0.91

Source: WSP Analysis, 2026

5.5.2 TRAVEL TIME

As described in Sections 5.1 and 5.4.1, the Project will make improvements that will reduce vehicle speeds, thereby improving safety and enhancing the comfort of everyone moving through the corridor. This will also modestly increase the travel time for the automobiles and trucks using 2nd



and 3rd streets. Based on a speed reduction from 35 mph to the posted speed limit of 25 mph, over the project distance of approximately 1 mile, per-vehicle travel times will increase from approximately 1.7 minutes to 2.4 minutes (see Table 5-16). When multiplied by all automobile and truck trips in the project area, and by the vehicle occupancy factor for autos, this adds up to approximately 150,000 person-hours per year, equivalent to negative \$25.0 million in present value, shown in Table 5-17. This value is included as a disbenefit in the analysis.

Table 5-16: Travel Time Assumptions and Sources

Variable	Unit	Value	Source
Typical No-Build Speed	mph	35	City of Cincinnati
Target Build Speed	mph	25	City of Cincinnati
Length of speed change	Miles	1	Project Information; Google Maps, average of 2nd St and 3rd St routes
No-Build Travel Time	Hours	0.029	Calculation
Build Travel Time	Hours	0.040	Calculation
Vehicle Occupancy Factor	persons per vehicle	1.52	USDOT BCA Guidance December 2025 Table A-3
Value of Travel Time - Local - All Purposes	2024\$ per person-hour	\$21.80	USDOT BCA Guidance December 2025 Table A-2
Value of Travel Time - Trucks	2024\$ per person-hour	\$37.20	USDOT BCA Guidance December 2025 Table A-2

Table 5-17: Travel Time Disbenefits, Millions of 2024 Dollars

Benefit	Undiscounted	Discounted
Travel Time	-\$66.36	-\$24.95

Source: WSP Analysis 2026

5.6 State of Good Repair

The Project restores and modernizes core transportation infrastructure assets that are at or beyond their intended service life, prioritizes safety-critical bridge and corridor elements with high consequences of failure, reduces long-term maintenance burdens through integrated reconstruction, and directly addresses documented and projected system vulnerabilities. The Project replaces recurring patch-and-repair cycles with comprehensive, durable design solutions across bridges, approaches, pedestrian facilities, drainage systems, and traffic control infrastructure in a critical downtown corridor.

Many intersections, sidewalks, curb ramps, pedestrian crossings, and traffic control devices in the Project area were last reconstructed as part of the FWW rebuild completed in 2000 and are now approximately 25 years old which are at or beyond the City's standard replacement cycle for



signals and pedestrian infrastructure. Current conditions include deteriorated curb ramps, damaged and missing pavers, buckled sidewalks from root intrusion and freeze-thaw cycles, outdated pedestrian signals, and patched surfaces that create accessibility and safety risks. The Project will reconstruct these assets using current ADA and safety standards, including new ADA-compliant curb ramps, rebuilt crosswalks, curb extensions, Accessible Pedestrian Signals (APS), and modern signal equipment that brings multiple high-use intersections into a State of Good Repair.

Documented maintenance records confirm systemic deterioration and recurring failure risk. From 2022 through February 2026, the City's 311Cincy system recorded **357 infrastructure service requests** within and immediately adjacent to the Project area. Approximately **54 percent** involved malfunctioning traffic signals or sign foundations consistent with equipment reaching the City's 25-year service life threshold. Additional requests involve potholes, sidewalk hazards, and failed storm inlets. This service history demonstrates elevated maintenance burden and asset vulnerability.

Beyond surface assets, the FWW Project addresses emerging structural and bridge-related vulnerabilities along FWW. Vehicular bridges over FWW consist of prestressed composite box beams that are currently rated in good condition but show **active leakage and efflorescence between beams** due to planter and embedded drainage system design. Planter drain pipes are cast within the prestressed beams and are inaccessible for repair, creating a projected long-term maintenance and durability risk. Recurrent clogging and leakage have been documented despite jetting and camera inspections, due to unfavorable pipe geometry and inaccessible joints.

Cold-weather performance creates additional safety vulnerability. Planter drainage pipes are susceptible to freezing, producing **ice formation along bridge fascias above the interstate**, posing hazards to motorists below and requiring complex, multi-agency emergency response for removal. Decking the trench and redesigning waterproofing and drainage systems would eliminate these exposure points and remove the ice hazard entirely.

Bridge approach slab settlement represents another recurring high-cost vulnerability. North approach slabs at multiple crossings, particularly at Race Street and Vine Street, have experienced repeated settlement, creating vertical offsets and ride quality and safety concerns. Temporary asphalt wedge repairs proved insufficient, requiring **pressure grout injection stabilization in 2012 (\$128,625)** and again in **2018**. Similar settlement at 3rd and Main streets required **grout injection repairs in 2022 (\$157,274.75)** to protect adjacent streetcar track infrastructure from structural stress. Additional settlements are projected. Integrated reconstruction as part of trench decking would allow improved subgrade compaction and permanently resolve these recurring failures.



Additional documented structural and asset vulnerabilities addressed by the Project include:

- **Backfill erosion at cable stay bridge abutments** due to void conditions between abutments and FWW walls, causing repeated minor settlements
- **Transit Center plenum leakage** at bridge approach interfaces, resulting in repeated replacement of ducts, walls, and electrical conduits due to water intrusion
- **Membrane overlay deterioration** on bridge decks, with prior warranty remedies no longer available after manufacturer exit
- **Planter waterproofing system replacement costs** (most recently \$214,069 in 2012) with predictable future replacement cycles
- **Recurring curb and sidewalk concrete crushing** due to expansion and drainage design conflicts
- **Specialty pedestrian railing damage** requiring costly custom welded repairs (\$10,604 for a single repair) due to obsolete components

The Project reduces construction and maintenance burdens through efficient, integrated design. Rather than continuing isolated repairs across multiple asset classes, the trench decking and corridor reconstruction enable unified waterproofing, drainage redesign, standardization of details, reduced specialty components, and elimination of inaccessible embedded systems. This integrated approach lowers lifecycle costs, reduces emergency repair frequency, and improves inspection and maintainability.

The Project also addresses drainage and surface vulnerability through upgraded stormwater and interface detailing, reducing recurring inlet failures, leakage, and localized flooding documented in maintenance records.

Through comprehensive asset renewal, bridge and approach stabilization, drainage and waterproofing redesign, intersection modernization, and integrated reconstruction, the Project brings the location to a State of Good Repair criteria by restoring aging core infrastructure, prioritizing high-consequence assets, reducing lifecycle maintenance burden, and correcting documented system vulnerabilities. These benefits were not quantified as part of this analysis but represent meaningful impacts.



6 SUMMARY OF RESULTS

6.1 Evaluation Measures

The benefit-cost analysis converts potential gains (benefits) and losses (costs) from the Project into monetary units and compares them. The following common benefit-cost evaluation measures are included in this BCA:

- **Net Present Value (NPV):** NPV compares the net benefits (benefits minus costs) after being discounted to present values using the real discount rate assumption. The NPV provides a perspective on the overall dollar magnitude of cash flows over time in today's dollar terms.
- **Benefit-Cost Ratio (BCR):** The evaluation also estimates the benefit-cost ratio; the present value of incremental benefits is divided by the present value of incremental costs to yield the benefit-cost ratio. The BCR expresses the relation of discounted benefits to discounted costs as a measure of the extent to which a project's benefits either exceed or fall short of the costs.
- **Internal Rate of Return (IRR):** The IRR provides the real discount rate which makes the NPV from the project equal to zero and the BCR is equal to one. In other words, it is the discount rate at which the project breaks even. Generally, the greater the IRR, the more desirable the project.
- **Payback Period:** The payback period refers to the period of time required to generate net benefits equal to the capital costs expended on the project.

6.2 BCA Results

The table below presents the evaluation results for the Project. Results are presented in undiscounted terms and discounted at 7.0 percent as prescribed by the USDOT. All benefits and costs were estimated in constant 2024 dollars over an evaluation period extending 26 years and includes 6 total years of design and construction (2024-2029) and 20 years of benefits (2030-2049).

In 2024 dollars, the Project is expected to generate \$57.9 million in discounted benefits. When compared to discounted costs of \$31.5 million, this results in a Net Present Value (NPV) of \$26.4 million and a benefit-cost ratio (BCR) of 1.84.

This BCA quantified benefits using the latest Project information and available data. Many other economic benefits, including reduced community exposure to noise and emissions from the Interstate, are not quantified in absence of detailed data. While these benefits would further increase the benefit cost ratio, they are discussed qualitatively within the BCA.



Table 6-1: Summary of Benefit-Cost Analysis Results, Millions of 2024 Dollars

Metric	Undiscounted	Discounted
Improved Safety	\$86.53	\$32.53
Stormwater Infrastructure	\$1.73	\$0.65
Pedestrian Facility Improvements	\$26.82	\$10.08
Cycling Facility Improvements	\$2.21	\$0.83
Mortality Reduction Benefits of Induced Active Transportation	\$25.62	\$9.63
Civic Space Amenity Value	\$80.09	\$30.11
Repurposed Right-of-Way	\$1.36	\$0.91
Travel Time	-\$66.36	-\$24.95
O&M Costs	-\$5.00	-\$1.89
Total Benefits	\$153.00	\$57.92
Total Costs	\$42.86	\$31.47
Net Present Value (NPV)	\$110.14	\$26.44
Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR)	3.57	1.84
Internal Rate of Return (IRR)	15.9%	
Payback Period (Years)	11 yrs	

Source: WSP Analysis 2026

7 SENSITIVITY ANALYSIS

The BCA outcomes presented in the previous sections rely on a large number of assumptions and long-term projections, both of which are subject to considerable uncertainty. The primary purpose of the sensitivity analysis is to help identify the variables and model parameters whose variations have the greatest impact on the BCA outcomes: the “critical variables.” The sensitivity analysis evaluates the impact of adjusting key assumptions on the BCR and NPV. It can also be used to:

- Evaluate the impact of changes in individual critical variables – how much the final results would vary with reasonable departures from the “preferred” or most likely value for the variable; and
- Assess the robustness of the BCA and, in particular, evaluate whether the conclusions reached under the “preferred” set of input values are significantly altered by reasonable departures from those values.

Several sensitivity tests were conducted and the outcomes of this analysis for the Project are summarized in Table 7-1. Each sensitivity test varies one assumption, retaining the same values as the base case for all other parameters. The results of the sensitivity analysis show the BCR remaining resilient in all scenarios, with the BCR consistently exceeding 1.4.



Table 7-1. Sensitivity Analysis Results, Millions of 2024 Dollars

Variable	Sensitivity Value	New BCR	New NPV	% Change In NPV
Base results	Build (7% Discount Rate)	1.84	\$26.44	N/A
Capital Cost Estimate	25% increase	1.47	\$18.57	-30%
O&M Cost Estimate	25% increase	1.83	\$25.97	-2%
Civic Space Amenity Value Approach	Measured using property value premium rather than willingness to pay (see below for details)	2.30	\$40.99	55%
Willingness to Pay	25% decrease	1.60	\$18.92	-28%
Crash Modification Factors	25% increase	1.48	\$15.18	-43%
Induced Trip Factors	25% decrease	1.75	\$23.61	-11%
Civic Space Visitors	25% decrease	1.55	\$17.23	-35%

Source: WSP Analysis 2026

7.1 Property Value Premium

As discussed in Section 5.3.1, the property value premium associated with beautified public spaces is an alternative method for assessing the value of civic space, in lieu of the willingness to pay method.

The property value premium approach is based on studies showing the property value premium of proximity to natural public spaces for commercial and residential real estate. A financial impact study of street-level greenery on commercial buildings concluded that there was an 8.5 percent positive transaction premium on properties within 250 meters of a public natural space. Consolidating the results of 30 other studies, another financial impact analysis of public natural space on property values recommended that a premium of 20 percent on properties abutting or fronting public natural space is a reasonable assumption.

For this sensitivity analysis, the estimate of 8.5 percent was applied to commercial buildings in the analysis, and the estimate of 20 percent was applied to residential buildings in the analysis. The analysis accounts for commercial building offices and residential properties within a 250-meter radius from the midpoint between Vine St. and Walnut St. and between 2nd St. and 3rd St. The analysis conservatively excluded parking/vacant lots, although there is an expectation that this project is likely to catalyze development on those lots, bringing even greater value. The assumptions used in estimating the property value uplift are shown in Table 7-2. The property value gains are assumed to occur as one time gain in the opening year of the Project.



Table 7-2: Property Value Premium Assumptions

Variable	Unit	Value	Source
Project Area Cumulative Commercial Property Value	2024\$	\$289.3 M	WSP Analysis of Hamilton County Auditor, 2024 Real Estate Tax Valuation Data
Project Area Cumulative Residential Property Value	2024\$	\$212.2 M	
Commercial Value Uplift Premium	percent	8.5%	The Financial Impact of Street-Level Greenery on New York commercial buildings, Yang et al.
Residential Value Uplift Premium	percent	20.0%	The Impact of Parks on Property Values: A Review of the Empirical Evidence

Overall, the Project’s property value premium benefits are \$44.7 million in discounted 2024 dollars, as shown in Table 7-3.

Table 7-3: Property Value Premium Benefits, Millions of 2024 Dollars

Benefit	Undiscounted	Discounted
Commercial Property Value Premium	\$24.59	\$16.38
Residential Property Value Premium	\$42.44	\$28.28
Total Property Value Premium	\$67.03	\$44.66

Source: WSP Analysis 2026

Board of Commissioners
Stephanie Summerow Dumas, President
Alicia Reece, Vice President
Denise Driehaus

Administrator
Jeffrey W. Aluotto
Phone: 513-946-4436

February 17, 2026

The Honorable Sean Duffy
Secretary of Transportation
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, District of Colombia 20590

Dear Secretary Duffy:

Re: FY 2026 Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD): Letter of Financial Commitment for Hamilton County's Fort Washington Way Project: A Strategic Infrastructure Investment for Economic Growth

It is our great pleasure to present this project, and commitment of partnership and funding, to ensure the success of the ***Fort Washington Way Project: A Strategic Infrastructure Investment for Economic Growth***. This FY 2026 Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) funding request is submitted by Hamilton County, Ohio, though the project reflects a true collaboration with local partners including the City of Cincinnati and the private sector, led by the Cincinnati Regional Chamber, along with the Cincinnati Parks organization.

As indicated within the application, ***Fort Washington Way Project: A Strategic Infrastructure Investment for Economic Growth*** is the realization of three-decades of community visioning, zoning changes, incremental construction projects, and improved community engagement that will reclaim and construct 5-acres of usable land above an existing interstate, that physically bridges the City's central business and jobs opportunity area with the newly repopulated riverfront.

This first phase of the project will be realized through partnership with USDOT via the BUILD program. With a total future eligible project cost of \$50 million, the project partners are committed to meeting the local match requirement of \$25 million. This will be sourced from multiple existing funding streams, which include:

- City and County Capital funding via local operating budgets,
- Joint City and County State of Ohio capital funding grants (2026, 2028, 2030),
- State funding and entitlements granted to MPO,
- City-established Tax Increment Financing district,
- Voter-approved sales tax levy to the local Transit Infrastructure Fund,
- Grants and endowment-financing via Cincinnati Parks,
- Private fundraising led by the Cincinnati Regional Chamber.

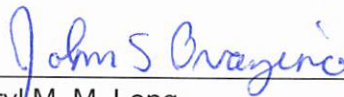
The project also leverages more than \$10 million of local investment from public and private sector leaders more than two decades ago that laid the foundation for our project today.

That foresight by our predecessors will ensure that the streets that surround the future public space are designed to promote safe access for all.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey W. Aluotto
County Administrator

for 

Sheryl M. M. Long
City of Cincinnati City Manager



Brendon J. Cull
President & CEO
Cincinnati Regional Chamber

JON HUSTED
OHIO

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 27, 2026

The Honorable Sean Duffy
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590

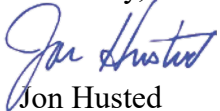
Dear Secretary Duffy,

Thank you for your dedication to transforming local community development across the nation. I write today to urge your full and fair consideration of the FY 2026 Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) Grant Program application for the Fort Washington Way Project. The project, a partnership between Hamilton County, the City of Cincinnati, and the Cincinnati Regional Chamber, will advance project delivery and construct an elevated cap structure over Interstate 71 / U.S. Route 50 (locally known as Fort Washington Way) between Vine Street and Walnut Street with room for all interior Tunnel Operating Systems to be built in the next phase. The cap will connect Cincinnati's central business district to our vibrant riverfront development, which is home to the Cincinnati Reds, the Cincinnati Bengals, and scores of businesses.

Over the last 25 years, Cincinnati has seen an incredible revitalization of the riverfront into a regional destination for entertainment and recreation. Achieving this long-term vision was made possible by our community's project to narrow Fort Washington Way, opening up 45 acres of land for redevelopment and reconnecting the historic street grid over the highway. Hamilton County, in close partnership with the City of Cincinnati, will use these grant funds to support the planning and design, advance engineering of the physical capping structure and associated safety systems, design the public space above and surrounding surface transportation safety improvements, and construct the first phase of this innovative project. This initiative will enhance economic development, improve safety for all modes of transportation, and improve the lives of our citizen-driven enterprises that will bolster the region's competitiveness.

I again urge your full and fair consideration of this proposal. Thank you for your work to support the infrastructure of our nation.

Sincerely,



Jon Husted
United States Senator

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC

February 13, 2026

The Honorable Sean Duffy
Secretary, U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave., S.E.
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Duffy,

I am writing regarding Hamilton County's application for the FY 2026 Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) grant program for the Fort Washington Way Project: A Strategic Infrastructure Investment for Economic Growth. I understand the project, a partnership between Hamilton County, the City of Cincinnati, and the Cincinnati Regional Chamber, will advance project delivery and construct an elevated cap structure over Interstate 71 / U.S. Route 50 (locally known as Fort Washington Way) between Vine Street and Walnut Street, with room for all interior Tunnel Operating Systems to be built in the next phase. The cap will connect Cincinnati's central business district to our vibrant riverfront development, which is home to the Cincinnati Reds, the Cincinnati Bengals, and scores of businesses. The cap will create a safe space and implement a suite of roadway safety improvements.

Over the last 25 years, Cincinnati has seen an incredible revitalization of the riverfront into a regional destination for entertainment and recreation. Achieving this long-term vision was made possible by our community's 2000 project to narrow Fort Washington Way, opening up 45 acres of land for redevelopment and reconnecting the historic street grid over the highway. At this same time, Cincinnati laid the foundation – quite literally – for a future capping of Fort Washington Way. Hamilton County is now aiming to secure a FY26 BUILD award to reclaim the area above the highway for a marquee public space in Downtown Cincinnati.

Hamilton County, in close partnership with the City of Cincinnati, will use these grant funds to support the planning and design, advance engineering of the physical capping structure and associated safety systems, design the public space above and surrounding surface transportation safety improvements, and construct the first phase of this innovative project. The outcome of these efforts will bring us one step closer to achieving this long-planned physical reconnection of the city to the riverfront. This initiative will enhance economic development, improve safety for all modes of transportation, and improve the lives of our citizens.

I respectfully ask that Hamilton County's project proposal be given full and fair consideration in accordance with all applicable laws, rules, and regulations.

Sincerely,



Congressman Greg Landsman



**Department of
Transportation**

transportation.ohio.gov

Mike DeWine, Governor
Jim Tressel, Lt. Governor
Pamela Boratyn, Director

February 17, 2026

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

Subject: Hamilton County's Fort Washington Way BUILD Application

Dear Secretary Duffy:

In the early 2000's, 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 to its riverfront. Hamilton County's application towards the FY 2026 Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) grant program for the Fort Washington Way Project: A Strategic Infrastructure Investment for Economic Growth will utilize those past investments to make that vision become reality.

The project, a partnership between Hamilton County, the City of Cincinnati, and the Cincinnati USA Regional Chamber, will advance project delivery and construct an elevated cap structure over Interstate 71 / U.S. Route 50 (locally known as Fort Washington Way) between Vine Street and Walnut Street with room for all interior Tunnel Operating Systems to be built in the next phase. The cap will connect Cincinnati's central business district to our vibrant riverfront development, which is home to the Cincinnati Reds, the Cincinnati Bengals, and scores of businesses. The cap will create a safe space and implement a suite of roadway safety improvements.

Hamilton County, in close partnership with the City of Cincinnati, will use these grant funds to support the planning and design, advance engineering of the physical capping structure and associated safety systems, design the public space above and surrounding surface transportation safety improvements, and construct the first phase of this innovative project.

As the direct recipient of the BUILD grant award and owner of the interstate infrastructure, ODOT will be directly involved in the project process and approval. Local partners have met with ODOT numerous times discussing this project and they are committed to meeting all ODOT requirements including engineering concerns, ongoing operations, and maintenance of the proposed tunnel prior to any construction.

We recognize the tremendous value 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 with our local partners on the Brent Spence Bridge Corridor Project, ODOT has a results-oriented and respectful relationship with local leaders, who are applying for this grant funding. Thus, ODOT offers its provisional support for their application for the FY 2026 BUILD Program. The Ohio Department of Transportation will be the direct recipient of the BUILD grant award.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Pamela Boratyn". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Pamela" being more prominent than the last name "Boratyn".

Pamela Boratyn, Director
Ohio Department of Transportation

Board of Commissioners
Stephanie Summerow Dumas, President
Alicia Reece, Vice President
Denise Driehaus

Administrator
Jeffrey W. Aluotto
Phone: 513-946-4436

February 17, 2026

The Honorable Sean Duffy
Secretary of Transportation
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, District of Colombia 20590

Dear Secretary Duffy:

Re: FY 2026 Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD): Letter of Financial Commitment for Hamilton County's Fort Washington Way Project: A Strategic Infrastructure Investment for Economic Growth

It is our great pleasure to present this project, and commitment of partnership and funding, to ensure the success of the ***Fort Washington Way Project: A Strategic Infrastructure Investment for Economic Growth***. This FY 2026 Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) funding request is submitted by Hamilton County, Ohio, though the project reflects a true collaboration with local partners including the City of Cincinnati and the private sector, led by the Cincinnati Regional Chamber, along with the Cincinnati Parks organization.

As indicated within the application, ***Fort Washington Way Project: A Strategic Infrastructure Investment for Economic Growth*** is the realization of three-decades of community visioning, zoning changes, incremental construction projects, and improved community engagement that will reclaim and construct 5-acres of usable land above an existing interstate, that physically bridges the City's central business and jobs opportunity area with the newly repopulated riverfront.

This first phase of the project will be realized through partnership with USDOT via the BUILD program. With a total future eligible project cost of \$50 million, the project partners are committed to meeting the local match requirement of \$25 million. This will be sourced from multiple existing funding streams, which include:

- City and County Capital funding via local operating budgets,
- Joint City and County State of Ohio capital funding grants (2026, 2028, 2030),
- State funding and entitlements granted to MPO,
- City-established Tax Increment Financing district,
- Voter-approved sales tax levy to the local Transit Infrastructure Fund,
- Grants and endowment-financing via Cincinnati Parks,
- Private fundraising led by the Cincinnati Regional Chamber.

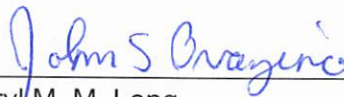
The project also leverages more than \$10 million of local investment from public and private sector leaders more than two decades ago that laid the foundation for our project today.

That foresight by our predecessors will ensure that the streets that surround the future public space are designed to promote safe access for all.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey W. Aluotto
County Administrator

for 

Sheryl M. M. Long
City of Cincinnati City Manager



Brendon J. Cull
President & CEO
Cincinnati Regional Chamber

February 17, 2026

The Honorable Sean Duffy
Secretary, U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Re: FY 2026 BUILD: Letter of Support for Hamilton County's Fort Washington Way Project

Dear Secretary Duffy:

I am writing to support Hamilton County's application towards the FY 2026 BUILD grant program for the Fort Washington Way Project: A Strategic Infrastructure Investment for Economic Growth. The project, a partnership between Hamilton County, the City of Cincinnati, and the Cincinnati Regional Chamber, will advance project delivery and construct an elevated cap structure over Interstate 71 / U.S. Route 50 (known locally as Fort Washington Way) between Vine Street and Walnut Street with room for all interior Tunnel Operating Systems to be built in the next phase. The cap will connect Cincinnati's central business district to our vibrant riverfront development, which is home to the Cincinnati Reds, the Cincinnati Bengals, Smale Riverfront Park and scores of businesses. The cap will create a safe space and implement a suite of roadway safety improvements.

The last 25 years have brought Cincinnati an incredible revitalization of the riverfront to a regional destination for entertainment and recreation. Achieving this long-term vision was made possible by our community's 2000 project to narrow Fort Washington Way, opening up 45 acres of land for redevelopment and reconnecting the historic street grid over the highway. At this same time, Cincinnati laid the foundation – quite literally – for a future capping of Fort Washington Way. Hamilton County is now aiming to secure a FY26 BUILD award to reclaim the area above the highway for a marquee public space in Downtown Cincinnati.

Hamilton County, in close partnership with the City of Cincinnati, will use the grant funds for planning and design, advance engineering of the physical capping structure and associated safety systems, to design the public space above and surrounding surface transportation safety improvements, and to construct the first phase of this innovative project. The outcome of these efforts will bring us one step closer to achieving this long-planned physical reconnection of the city to the riverfront. This initiative will enhance economic development, improve safety for all modes of transportation, and improve the lives of our citizens.

I ask your consideration of this grant application for funding from the FY 2026 BUILD Program and fully support its implementation to ensure the full scope of this much-needed project is delivered in a timely manner. I look forward to the successful completion of the Fort Washington Way Project. Please contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,



Mark R. Policinski, CEO
OKI Regional Council of Governments
Phone: 513.621.6300
Email: mpolicinski@oki.org

Josh Gerth
President

Mark R. Policinski
CEO

720 E. Pete Rose Way, Suite 420 Cincinnati, Ohio 45202 | Phone: 513.621.6300 | Fax: 513.621.9325 | www.oki.org

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February 11, 2026

The Honorable Sean Duffy
Secretary, U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Duffy:

Re: FY 2026 Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) Program – Letter of Support for Hamilton County’s Fort Washington Way Project

I am writing on behalf of FC Cincinnati to express our strong support for **Hamilton County’s application to the FY 2026 Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) grant program** for the **Fort Washington Way Project**.

This project, led by Hamilton County in partnership with the City of Cincinnati and the Cincinnati Regional Chamber, will advance the design and construction of an elevated cap structure over Interstate 71 / U.S. Route 50 (Fort Washington Way) between Vine Street and Walnut Street. The cap will reconnect Cincinnati’s central business district with its riverfront and create a safe public space while implementing critical roadway and multimodal safety improvements. This investment will strengthen mobility, support economic growth, and improve access to one of the region’s most active destinations.

Over the past 25 years, Cincinnati has transformed its riverfront into a nationally recognized center for recreation, entertainment, and commerce. That progress began with the 2000 Fort Washington Way project, which restored the historic street grid and laid the foundation for a future cap over the highway. Hamilton County is now positioned to complete this long-planned vision by reclaiming space above Fort Washington Way for a signature civic and transportation asset.

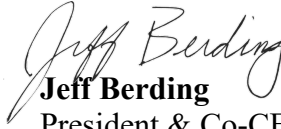
As a major downtown institution, FC Cincinnati directly benefits from improvements that enhance safety, pedestrian connectivity, and multimodal access. Our organization brings hundreds of thousands of visitors to downtown Cincinnati each year, and infrastructure investments such as this improve the experience for residents, employees, and visitors alike.

Hamilton County will use BUILD funds to advance planning, engineering, and construction of the first phase of this project, bringing the community closer to a fully realized reconnection between downtown and the riverfront. This initiative aligns squarely with the BUILD program’s objectives and will deliver lasting regional benefits.



Thank you for your consideration of this application. FC Cincinnati strongly supports the Fort Washington Way Project and looks forward to its successful implementation.

Sincerely,


Jeff Berding
President & Co-CEO
FC Cincinnati



Andrew Aiello
CEO & General Manager
525 Vine Street Suite 500
Cincinnati, OH 45202
aaiello@go-metro.com

February 12, 2026

The Honorable Sean Duffy
Secretary, U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Duffy:

Re: FY 2026 Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD): Letter of Support for Hamilton County's Fort Washington Way Project: A Strategic Infrastructure Investment for Economic Growth

I am writing to support Hamilton County's application towards the FY 2026 Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) grant program for the ***Fort Washington Way Project: A Strategic Infrastructure Investment for Economic Growth***. The project, a partnership between Hamilton County, the City of Cincinnati, and the Cincinnati Regional Chamber, will advance project delivery and construct an elevated cap structure over Interstate 71 / U.S. Route 50 (locally known as Fort Washington Way) between Vine Street and Walnut Street with room for all interior Tunnel Operating Systems to be built in the next phase. The cap will connect Cincinnati's central business district to our vibrant riverfront development, which is home to the Cincinnati Reds, the Cincinnati Bengals, Smale Riverfront Park and scores of businesses. The cap will create a safe space and implement a suite of roadway safety improvements.

Over the last 25 years, Cincinnati has seen an incredible revitalization of the riverfront into a regional destination for entertainment and recreation. Achieving this long-term vision was made possible by our community's 2000 project to narrow Fort Washington Way, opening up 45 acres of land for redevelopment and reconnecting the historic street grid over the highway. At this same time, Cincinnati laid the foundation – quite literally – for a future capping of Fort Washington Way. Hamilton County is now aiming to secure a FY26 BUILD award to reclaim the area above the highway for a marquee public space in Downtown Cincinnati.

Hamilton County, in close partnership with the City of Cincinnati, will use these grant funds to support the planning and design, advance engineering of the physical capping structure and associated safety systems, design the public space above and surrounding surface transportation safety improvements, and construct the first phase of this innovative project. The outcome of these efforts will bring us one step closer to achieving this long-planned physical reconnection of the city to the riverfront. This initiative will enhance economic development, improve safety for all modes of transportation, and improve the lives of our citizens.

We welcome your consideration of this grant application for funding from the FY 2026 BUILD Program and fully support its implementation to ensure the full scope of this much-needed project is delivered in a timely manner. I look forward to the successful completion of the ***Fort Washington Way Project: A Strategic Infrastructure Investment for Economic Growth*** and enhanced local and regional impact due to its completion.



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Aiello". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letter being a large capital 'A'.

Andy Aiello
CEO/General Manager
Southwest Ohio Regional Transit Authority





Together we do more in Cincinnati Parks.

February 18, 2026

The Honorable Sean Duffy
Secretary, U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Duffy:

Re: FY 2026 Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD): Letter of Support for Hamilton County's Fort Washington Way Project: A Strategic Infrastructure Investment for Economic Growth

On behalf of the Cincinnati Parks Foundation, we are writing to support Hamilton County's application towards the FY 2026 Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) grant program for the **Fort Washington Way Project: A Strategic Infrastructure Investment for Economic Growth**. The project, a partnership between Hamilton County, the City of Cincinnati, and the Cincinnati Regional Chamber, will advance project delivery and construct an elevated cap structure over Interstate 71 / U.S. Route 50 (locally known as Fort Washington Way) between Vine Street and Walnut Street with room for all interior Tunnel Operating Systems to be built in the next phase. The cap will connect Cincinnati's central business district to our vibrant riverfront development, which is home to the Cincinnati Reds, the Cincinnati Bengals, the John G. & Phyllis W. Smale Riverfront Park and several local businesses. The cap will create a safe space and implement a suite of roadway safety improvements.

As a partner to Cincinnati Parks, we support any effort to add more greenspace to the city. Cincinnati Parks is a 200-year-old urban park system that represents 10% of the city's landmass, more than 5,000 acres, which constitutes 130 parks and greenspace spread across the 52 neighborhoods of Cincinnati. It's often rated as one of the top ten best urban park systems by the Trust for Public Land. For more than 30 years, the Cincinnati Parks Foundation (CPF) has been the official philanthropic partner of Cincinnati Parks. We are proud to have been part of the efforts to develop, program and maintain The John G. & Phyllis W. Smale Riverfront Park which helps to generate more than \$2.5B for our region annually.

Over the last 25 years, Cincinnati has seen an incredible revitalization of the riverfront into a regional destination for entertainment and recreation. Achieving this long-term vision was made possible by our community's 2000 project to narrow Fort Washington Way, opening up 45 acres of land for redevelopment and reconnecting the historic street grid over the highway. At this same time, Cincinnati laid the foundation – quite literally – for a future capping of Fort Washington Way. Hamilton County is now aiming to secure a FY26 BUILD award to reclaim the area above the highway for a marquee public space in Downtown Cincinnati.

The outcome of these efforts will bring us one step closer to achieving this long-planned physical reconnection of the city to the riverfront. This initiative will enhance economic development, improve safety for all modes of transportation, and improve the lives of our citizens.

Cincinnati Parks Foundation is the primary philanthropic partner to Cincinnati Parks.

421 Oak Street, Cincinnati, OH 45219 • (513) 861-0023 • cincinnati parks foundation.org



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Emerita

We welcome your consideration of this grant application for funding from the FY 2026 BUILD Program and fully support its implementation to ensure the full scope of this much-needed project is delivered in a timely manner. The Cincinnati Parks Foundation looks forward to the successful completion of the **Fort Washington Way Project: A Strategic Infrastructure Investment for Economic Growth** and enhanced local and regional impact due to its completion.

Sincerely,



Jennifer H. Spieser, President + CEO
Cincinnati Parks Foundation



February 20, 2026

The Honorable Shawn Duffy
Secretary of Transportation
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, District of Columbia 20590

BOARD OF PARKS

COMMISSIONERS

Re: FY 2026 Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD): Letter of Support for Hamilton County's Fort Washington Way Project: A Strategic Infrastructure Investment for Economic Growth

Dear Secretary Duffy,

Molly North
President

Kick Lee
Vice President

Susan F. Castellini

Phyllis McCallum

John E. Neyer

I write to express Cincinnati Parks support of Hamilton County's application towards the FY 2026 Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) grant program for the **Fort Washington Way Project: A Strategic Infrastructure Investment for Economic Growth**. This project represents a historic opportunity to reconnect our Central Business District to our riverfront by capping the interstate and building a public park. Cincinnati Parks is committed to working with Hamilton County, the City of Cincinnati, and other regional partners to study, design, and advance this important project.

Jason Barron
Director

Jenny Mobley
Deputy Director

Crystal Courtney
Division Manager

Herta Fairbanks
Division Manager

Rocky Merz
Division Manager

Travis Miller
Division Manager

At the time of the highway project's original construction, Fort Washington Way's design separated Cincinnati's Central Business District and the riverfront. At the time the separation may have seemed logical – the riverfront was mostly a warehouse district in the floodplain. However, over the past 25 years, a truly regional effort has transformed our riverfront into one of the most vibrant and active public spaces in the Midwest. The riverfront is now home to hundreds of apartments, several restaurants and entertainment venues, and offices space supporting hundreds of jobs. It is also home to two professional sports stadiums, a transit center, a new music venue, the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center, and most importantly, from my perspective, Smale Riverfront Park.

Opened in 2012, Smale Riverfront Park is one of the premier parks in the nation and was named the best riverwalk in the country by a 2024 USA Today readers' choice poll. The \$100 million dollar park features numerous fountains and plazas, public art installations and statues, unique playgrounds and interactive children's features, and a working, handcrafted carousel, all nestled underneath the historic Roebling Suspension Bridge – the model for the Brooklyn Bridge.

The efforts to cap Fort Washington Way and develop a new public park builds upon this legacy in the Cincinnati community of preserving and committing invaluable public space to park land. This plan will reconnect Downtown to the revitalized riverfront for the benefit Cincinnatians for generations to come. Cincinnati Parks pledges our support of this application for BUILD funding for the **Fort Washington Way Project: A Strategic Infrastructure Investment for Economic Growth**.

Sincerely,

Jason Barron
Director

950 Eden Park Drive
Cincinnati, Ohio 45202
Phone (513) 352-4080
Fax (513) 352-4096
www.cincinnatiiparks.com





February 12, 2026

The Honorable Sean Duffy
Secretary, U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Re: FY 2026 Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD): Letter of Support for Hamilton County's Fort Washington Way Project: A Strategic Infrastructure Investment for Economic Growth

Dear Secretary Duffy:

Great Parks of Hamilton County is pleased to support Hamilton County's application for the FY 2026 Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) grant program for the *Fort Washington Way Project: A Strategic Infrastructure Investment for Economic Growth*. The project, a partnership between Hamilton County, the City of Cincinnati, and the Cincinnati Regional Chamber, will advance project delivery and construct an elevated cap structure over Interstate 71 / U.S. Route 50 (locally known as Fort Washington Way) between Vine Street and Walnut Street, with room for all interior Tunnel Operating Systems to be built in the next phase. The cap will connect Cincinnati's central business district to our vibrant riverfront development, which is home to the Cincinnati Reds, the Cincinnati Bengals, Smale Riverfront Park, and scores of businesses. The cap will create a safe space and implement a suite of roadway safety improvements.

Over the last 25 years, Cincinnati has seen an incredible revitalization of the riverfront into a regional destination for entertainment and recreation. Achieving this long-term vision was made possible by our community's 2000 project to narrow Fort Washington Way, which opened 45 acres of land for redevelopment and reconnects the historic street grid over the highway. At this same time, Cincinnati laid the foundation – quite literally – for a future capping of Fort Washington Way. Hamilton County is now seeking a FY26 BUILD award to reclaim the area above the highway as a marquee public space in Downtown Cincinnati.

Hamilton County, in close partnership with the City of Cincinnati, will use these grant funds to support planning and design; advance engineering of the physical capping structure and associated safety systems; design the public space above and surrounding the surface transportation safety improvements; and construct the first phase of this innovative project. The outcome of these efforts will bring us one step closer to achieving this long-planned physical reconnection of the city to the riverfront. This initiative will

Board of Park Commissioners

Caroline Keating • Caren Laverty • Scott Schuster • Marcus Thompson • Melissa Wegman • Todd Palmetter, CEO
10245 Winton Road • Cincinnati, OH 45231 • greatparks.org



enhance economic development, improve safety for all modes of transportation, and improve the lives of our citizens.

As the most-visited attraction in the greater Cincinnati region, with over 7.3 million visits in 2025, Great Parks would benefit from increased publicly accessible space in the heart of downtown. Programming of this amazing space would be in partnership with Cincinnati Parks, Cincinnati Regional Chamber, Visit Cincy, and other regional leaders who create and promote amazing outdoor experiences. Great Parks is also leading the region in developing an expanded shared-use trail system, including the Oasis Corridor, which will provide the most significant trail connection to downtown Cincinnati as part of the CROWN and Ohio to Erie trail systems.

We welcome your consideration of this grant application for funding from the FY 2026 BUILD Program and fully support its implementation to ensure the full scope of this much-needed project is delivered in a timely manner. I look forward to the successful completion of the *Fort Washington Way Project: A Strategic Infrastructure Investment for Economic Growth* and enhanced local and regional impact.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Todd E. Palmeto".

Todd Palmeto
Chief Executive Officer



February 17, 2026

The Honorable Sean Duffy
Secretary, U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Duffy:

Re: FY 2026 Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) Grant: Letter of Support for Hamilton County's Fort Washington Way Project

I am writing to express my strong support for Hamilton County's application to the FY 2026 Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) grant program for the ***Fort Washington Way Project: A Strategic Infrastructure Investment for Economic Growth***.

This transformative project - a partnership among Hamilton County, the City of Cincinnati, and the Cincinnati Regional Chamber, will advance the design and construction of an elevated cap structure over Interstate 71 / U.S. Route 50 (Fort Washington Way) between Vine Street and Walnut Street with space reserved for future Tunnel Operating Systems. The project will physically and economically reconnect Cincinnati's central business district with its riverfront, home to the Cincinnati Reds, the Cincinnati Bengals, Smale Riverfront Park, and a vibrant mix of businesses and public spaces.

For more than two decades, our community has invested strategically in revitalizing the riverfront into a regional destination for recreation, entertainment, and commerce. The 2000 redesign and narrowing of Fort Washington Way unlocked 45 acres of redevelopment opportunity and reconnected portions of the historic street grid, while thoughtfully preparing for a future cap. This BUILD request represents the next critical step in realizing that long-term vision — reclaiming valuable urban space above the highway to create a signature civic environment while enhancing multimodal safety and mobility.

As a real estate development and design-build firm headquartered in this region, Merus understands firsthand the catalytic power of infrastructure investment. Projects of this scale create market confidence, stimulate private investment, and unlock new mixed-use, commercial, residential, and hospitality opportunities. Reconnecting downtown to the riverfront will strengthen walkability, enhance quality of place, and support sustained economic growth.

Hamilton County, in close partnership with the City of Cincinnati, will use BUILD funding to advance planning and engineering of the cap structure and associated safety systems, design the public space above the corridor, and implement critical surface transportation improvements as part of the first phase of construction. These efforts will move our region significantly closer to achieving a long-envisioned reconnection — improving safety for all modes of transportation while enhancing economic vitality and quality of life.

I respectfully urge your favorable consideration of this application. The Fort Washington Way Project is a strategic infrastructure investment that will deliver lasting local and regional benefits for decades to come. Merus fully supports its implementation and looks forward to the economic and community benefits its completion will achieve.

Sincerely,

Molly North
CEO, Merus

877 271 6400 | merus1894.com

Cincinnati
302 W. 3rd Street
Suite 300
Cincinnati, OH 45202

Nashville
1222 Demonbreun Street
Suite 1200
Nashville, TN 37203

Pittsburgh
11 Stanwix Street
Suite 1050
Pittsburgh, PA 15222

Raleigh
4509 Creedmoor Road
Suite 500
Raleigh, NC 27612



The Honorable Sean Duffy
Secretary, U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

February 13, 2026

Dear Secretary Duffy:

Re: FY 2026 Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD): Letter of Support for Hamilton County's Fort Washington Way Project: A Strategic Infrastructure Investment for Economic Growth

I am writing to support Hamilton County's application towards the FY 2026 Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) grant program for the Fort Washington Way Project: A Strategic Infrastructure Investment for Economic Growth. The project, a partnership between Hamilton County, the City of Cincinnati, and the Cincinnati Regional Chamber, will advance project delivery and construct an elevated cap structure over Interstate 71 / U.S. Route 50 (locally known as Fort Washington Way) between Vine Street and Walnut Street with room for all interior Tunnel Operating Systems to be built in the next phase. The cap will connect Cincinnati's central business district to our vibrant riverfront development, which is home to the Cincinnati Reds, the Cincinnati Bengals, ***The Freedom Center (a national Smithsonian affiliate and accredited member of the American Alliance of Museums)***, Smale Riverfront Park and scores of businesses. The cap will create a safe space and implement a suite of roadway safety improvements.

Over the last 25 years, Cincinnati has seen an incredible revitalization of the riverfront into a regional destination for entertainment and recreation. Achieving this long-term vision was made possible by our community's 2000 project to narrow Fort Washington Way, opening up 45 acres of land for redevelopment and reconnecting the historic street grid over the highway. At this same time, Cincinnati laid the foundation – quite literally – for a future capping of Fort Washington Way. Hamilton County is now aiming to secure a FY26 BUILD award to reclaim the area above the highway for a marquee public space in Downtown Cincinnati.

The Freedom Center would benefit greatly from this development in the following ways: 1) enhanced connectivity; 2) improved accessibility; and 3) financial sustainability.

Visitors and local communities that frequent the Central Business District and The Banks area encounter significant visual, psychological and physical barriers that hinder their access to our facility. These obstacles, positioned between Second and Third Streets, create a disconnect between the museum and the vibrant heart of the Central Business District. By strategically addressing and removing these barriers, we can dramatically enhance access to the Freedom Center, inviting more visitors to fully experience all that we offer. This transformation will not only benefit residents but also attract out-of-town guests, making it easier for them to participate in educational activities, meetings and events. Furthermore, this improvement will serve as a crucial element of our broader tourism initiatives, reinforcing the Freedom Center's role as a vital destination in our community.



Hamilton County, in close partnership with the City of Cincinnati, will use these grant funds to support the planning and design, advance engineering of the physical capping structure and associated safety systems, design the public space above and surrounding surface transportation safety improvements, and construct the first phase of this innovative project. The outcome of these efforts will bring us one step closer to achieving this long-planned physical reconnection of the city to the riverfront. This initiative will enhance economic development, improve safety for all modes of transportation, and improve the lives of our citizens.

We welcome your consideration of this grant application for funding from the FY 2026 BUILD Program and fully support its implementation to ensure the full scope of this much-needed project is delivered in a timely manner. I look forward to the successful completion of the Fort Washington Way Project: A Strategic Infrastructure Investment for Economic Growth and enhanced local and regional impact due to its completion.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Woodrow Keown, Jr.', written in a cursive style.

Woodrow Keown, Jr.
President and Chief Operating Officer
National Underground Railroad Freedom Center



Cincinnati

1435 Vine Street, #435
Cincinnati, OH 45202

937-424-3310
cincinnati@uli.org
cincinnati.uli.org
www.uli.org

ULI – the Urban Land Institute
2001 L Street, NW
Suite 200
Washington, DC 20036

February 11, 2026

The Honorable Sean Duffy
Secretary, U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Duffy:

Re: FY 2026 Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD): Letter of Support for Hamilton County's Fort Washington Way Project: A Strategic Infrastructure Investment for Economic Growth

I am writing to support Hamilton County's application towards the FY 2026 Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) grant program for the ***Fort Washington Way Project: A Strategic Infrastructure Investment for Economic Growth***. The project, a partnership between Hamilton County, the City of Cincinnati, and the Cincinnati Regional Chamber, will advance project delivery and construct an elevated cap structure over Interstate 71 / U.S. Route 50 (locally known as Fort Washington Way) between Vine Street and Walnut Street with room for all interior Tunnel Operating Systems to be built in the next phase. The cap will connect Cincinnati's central business district to our vibrant riverfront development, which is home to the Cincinnati Reds, the Cincinnati Bengals, Smale Riverfront Park and scores of businesses. The cap will create a safe space and implement a suite of roadway safety improvements.

Over the last 25 years, Cincinnati has seen an incredible revitalization of the riverfront into a regional destination for entertainment and recreation. Achieving this long-term vision was made possible by our community's 2000 project to narrow Fort Washington Way, opening up 45 acres of land for redevelopment and reconnecting the historic street grid over the highway. At this same time, Cincinnati laid the foundation – quite literally – for a future capping of Fort Washington Way. Hamilton County is now aiming to secure a FY26 BUILD award to reclaim the area above the highway for a marquee public space in Downtown Cincinnati.

As the local district council of the Urban Land Institute, ULI Cincinnati has long been engaged in advancing catalytic infrastructure and redevelopment initiatives that strengthen our urban core. In 2019, ULI Cincinnati had the honor of hosting the global [ULI Hines Student Competition Finals](#), where the project brief centered on the transformative potential of decking Fort Washington Way and reconnecting downtown Cincinnati to the riverfront.

The competition brought top graduate real estate and urban planning students from across the country to Cincinnati to develop financially feasible, design-forward concepts for capping the highway and activating the surrounding development sites.

The Honorable Sean Duffy
Page Two

Hosting this national event elevated Cincinnati's vision for Fort Washington Way onto a global stage and reinforced the long-term importance of reclaiming this critical piece of infrastructure as an economic and civic asset. The competition demonstrated how strategic capping could unlock development value, expand public space, enhance connectivity, and generate sustained economic impact.

For ULI Cincinnati, the current BUILD application represents the implementation phase of a vision that has been studied, modeled, and refined through both professional and academic lenses. Advancing the Fort Washington Way cap aligns directly with ULI's mission to shape the future of the built environment for transformative impact in communities worldwide. The project strengthens downtown connectivity, enhances safety, promotes economic growth, and creates opportunities for equitable development—outcomes that benefit our members and the broader region.

We strongly support this application and believe the Fort Washington Way Project represents one of the most strategic infrastructure investments our region can make.

Hamilton County, in close partnership with the City of Cincinnati, will use these grant funds to support the planning and design, advance engineering of the physical capping structure and associated safety systems, design the public space above and surrounding surface transportation safety improvements, and construct the first phase of this innovative project. The outcome of these efforts will bring us one step closer to achieving this long-planned physical reconnection of the city to the riverfront. This initiative will enhance economic development, improve safety for all modes of transportation, and improve the lives of our citizens.

We welcome your consideration of this grant application for funding from the FY 2026 BUILD Program and fully support its implementation to ensure the full scope of this much-needed project is delivered in a timely manner. I look forward to the successful completion of the ***Fort Washington Way Project: A Strategic Infrastructure Investment for Economic Growth*** and enhanced local and regional impact due to its completion.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kimberly A. Fantaci".

Kimberly A. Fantaci
Director



3080 Exploration Avenue, Suite 640
Cincinnati, OH 45206

513.655.3981
www.tristatetrails.org

February 18, 2025

The Honorable Sean Duffy
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Duffy:

Tri-State Trails is pleased to express our support for Hamilton County's Fort Washington Way Project: A Strategic Infrastructure Investment for Economic Growth. The project, a partnership between Hamilton County, the City of Cincinnati, and the Cincinnati Regional Chamber, will advance project delivery and construct an elevated cap structure over Interstate 71 / U.S. Route 50 (locally known as Fort Washington Way) between Vine Street and Walnut Street with room for all interior Tunnel Operating Systems to be built in the next phase. The cap will connect Cincinnati's central business district to our vibrant riverfront development, which is home to the Cincinnati Reds, the Cincinnati Bengals, Smale Riverfront Park, the CROWN urban trail loop, and scores of businesses. The cap will create a safe space and implement a suite of roadway safety improvements.

Over the last 25 years, Cincinnati has seen an incredible revitalization of the riverfront into a regional destination for entertainment and recreation. Achieving this long-term vision was made possible by our community's 2000 project to narrow Fort Washington Way, opening up 45 acres of land for redevelopment and reconnecting the historic street grid over the highway. At this same time, Cincinnati laid the foundation for a future capping of Fort Washington Way. Hamilton County is now aiming to secure a FY26 BUILD award to reclaim the area above the highway for a marquee public space in Downtown Cincinnati.

Hamilton County, in close partnership with the City of Cincinnati, will use these grant funds to support the planning and design, advance engineering of the physical capping structure and associated safety systems, design the public space above and surrounding surface transportation safety improvements, and construct the first phase of this innovative project. The outcome of these efforts will bring us one step closer to achieving this long-planned physical reconnection of the city to the riverfront. This initiative will enhance economic development, improve safety for all modes of transportation, and improve the lives of our citizens.

Tri-State Trails strongly supports Hamilton County's BUILD application for the Fort Washington Way Project. The project is a community focused investment that will provide lasting benefits for residents and the broader region. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Wade Johnston, AICP
Executive Director
Tri-State Trails
wade@tristatetrails.org

CINCINNATI REDS™

Great American Ball Park, 100 Joe Nuxhall Way, Cincinnati, OH 45202-4109, Phone: 513.765.7000, Fax: 513.765.7342, www.reds.com

February 20, 2026

The Honorable Sean Duffy
Secretary, U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Duffy:

Re: FY 2026 Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) Grant — Letter of Support for Hamilton County's Fort Washington Way Project

On behalf of the Cincinnati Reds, I am proud to express our strong support for Hamilton County's application to the FY 2026 BUILD grant program for the Fort Washington Way Project: A Strategic Infrastructure Investment for Economic Growth. This project—advanced in partnership with Hamilton County, the City of Cincinnati, and the Cincinnati Regional Chamber—will construct an elevated cap structure over Interstate 71 / U.S. Route 50 between Vine Street and Walnut Street, laying the groundwork for future Tunnel Operating Systems and creating a transformative new public space.

As Major League Baseball's first professional franchise, the Cincinnati Reds have been woven into the economic and cultural fabric of this region for more than 150 years. Great American Ball Park is not only the "Home of the Reds"—it is a major economic driver, drawing millions of visitors to downtown Cincinnati and supporting jobs, small businesses, hospitality, tourism, and year-round activity along the riverfront. Our ballpark sits at the heart of a thriving entertainment district that includes the Cincinnati Bengals, Smale Riverfront Park, and a growing ecosystem of restaurants, hotels, and attractions.

Yet today, Fort Washington Way remains a physical barrier that limits the full economic and social potential of this area. The proposed cap will change that. By reconnecting the central business district to the riverfront, this project will strengthen the flow of people, commerce, and opportunity between two of the region's most important economic engines. It will create a safer, more welcoming pedestrian experience for the thousands who walk to Reds games and riverfront events, while also generating new programmable space that the Reds and our civic partners can activate for community gatherings, cultural events, and year-round engagement.



WORLD SERIES CHAMPIONS: 1919, 1940, 1975, 1976, 1990 **NATIONAL LEAGUE CHAMPIONS:** 1919, 1939, 1940, 1961, 1970, 1972, 1975, 1976, 1990

The Reds have long invested in the vibrancy of Cincinnati's riverfront—helping transform it into a destination that attracts residents, visitors, and businesses alike. The 2000 reconfiguration of Fort Washington Way, which opened 45 acres for redevelopment and restored the historic street grid, was a pivotal moment in that transformation. It also laid the foundation for the cap now proposed. With support from the FY26 BUILD program, Hamilton County can complete the next chapter of this long-planned vision and deliver a signature public asset that will elevate the region's competitiveness, connectivity, and quality of life.

BUILD funding will enable Hamilton County and the City of Cincinnati to advance planning, engineering, and design for the capping structure and safety systems; design the public space above and adjacent to the corridor; and construct the project's first phase. These investments will catalyze economic development, improve multimodal safety, and enhance the daily experience of residents, workers, and visitors.

The Cincinnati Reds fully support this project and its timely implementation. We are committed to the continued economic vitality and vibrancy of our region, and we recognize the Fort Washington Way cap as a once-in-a-generation opportunity to strengthen the connection between downtown and the riverfront we proudly call home.

Thank you for your consideration of this important application. Our organization—and our fans—look forward to the significant local and regional benefits that will result from the successful completion of the Fort Washington Way Project.

Go Redlegs!

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Phillip J. Castellini". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized "P" and "C".

Phillip J. Castellini
President & CEO

Carol Ann and
Ralph V. Haile, Jr.

FOUNDATION

February 19, 2026

The Honorable Sean Duffy
Secretary, U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Duffy:

Re: FY 2026 Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD): Letter of Support for Hamilton County's Fort Washington Way Project: A Strategic Infrastructure Investment for Economic Growth

We, along with many others, support Hamilton County's application towards the FY 2026 Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) grant program for the *Fort Washington Way Project: A Strategic Infrastructure Investment for Economic Growth*. The project, a partnership between Hamilton County, the City of Cincinnati, and the Cincinnati Regional Chamber, will advance project delivery and construct an elevated cap structure over Interstate 71 / U.S. Route 50 (locally known as Fort Washington Way) between Vine Street and Walnut Street with room for all interior Tunnel Operating Systems to be built in the next phase. The cap will connect Cincinnati's central business district to our vibrant riverfront development, which is home to the Cincinnati Reds, the Cincinnati Bengals, Smale Riverfront Park and scores of businesses. The cap will create a safe space and implement a suite of roadway safety improvements.

Over the last 25 years, Cincinnati has seen an incredible revitalization of the riverfront into a regional destination for entertainment and recreation. Achieving this long-term vision was made possible by our community's 2000 project to narrow Fort Washington Way, opening up 45 acres of land for redevelopment and reconnecting the historic street grid over the highway. At this same time, Cincinnati laid the foundation – quite literally – for a future capping of Fort Washington Way. Hamilton County is now aiming to secure a FY26 BUILD award to reclaim the area above the highway for a marquee public space in Downtown Cincinnati.

As a charitable foundation serving the ten county greater Cincinnati region, this project aligns with our core mission to invest in regional economic development by delivering transformative changes to downtown and the surrounding region. Capping Fort Washington Way, through this collaborative regional approach, will create a destination amenity for the region and allow the city to attract both large and small events as a key piece of the city's parks network along the Ohio River. This project positions the city as the economic epicenter of three great states contributing to talent retention and attraction and the overall vibrancy of the region. We believe this project will be a key driver, developing the necessary civic infrastructure of downtown and further positioning Cincinnati for growth in the 21st century.

Hamilton County, in close partnership with the City of Cincinnati, will use these grant funds to support the planning and design, advance engineering of the physical capping structure and associated safety systems, design the public space above and surrounding surface transportation safety improvements, and construct the first phase of this innovative project. The outcome of these efforts will bring us one step closer to achieving this long-planned physical reconnection of the city to the riverfront. This initiative will enhance economic development, improve safety for all modes of transportation, and improve the lives of our citizens.

Bernard L. McKay, President & CEO
608 Madison Avenue, Suite 200 • Covington, KY 41011
Office 513-589-9790 • bernie.mckay@hailefoundation.org

We welcome your consideration of this grant application for funding from the FY 2026 BUILD Program and fully support its implementation to ensure the full scope of this much-needed project is delivered in a timely manner. I look forward to the successful completion of the ***Fort Washington Way Project: A Strategic Infrastructure Investment for Economic Growth*** and enhanced local and regional impact due to its completion.

Sincerely,



Bernard L. McKay
President and CEO
Carol Ann and Ralph V. Haile, Jr. Foundation

February 23, 2026

The Honorable Sean Duffy
Secretary, U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Duffy:

Re: FY 2026 Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD): Letter of Support for Hamilton County's Fort Washington Way Project: A Strategic Infrastructure Investment for Economic Growth

I am writing to support Hamilton County's application towards the FY 2026 Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) grant program for the ***Fort Washington Way Project: A Strategic Infrastructure Investment for Economic Growth***. The project, a partnership between Hamilton County, the City of Cincinnati, and the Cincinnati Regional Chamber, will advance project delivery and construct an elevated cap structure over Interstate 71 / U.S. Route 50 (locally known as Fort Washington Way) between Vine Street and Walnut Street with room for all interior Tunnel Operating Systems to be built in the next phase. The cap will connect Cincinnati's central business district to our vibrant riverfront development, which is home to the Cincinnati Reds, the Cincinnati Bengals, Smale Riverfront Park and scores of businesses. The cap will create a safe space and implement a suite of roadway safety improvements.

Over the last 25 years, Cincinnati has seen an incredible revitalization of the riverfront into a regional destination for entertainment and recreation. Achieving this long-term vision was made possible by our community's 2000 project to narrow Fort Washington Way, opening up 45 acres of land for redevelopment and reconnecting the historic street grid over the highway. At this same time, Cincinnati laid the foundation – quite literally – for a future capping of Fort Washington Way. Hamilton County is now aiming to secure a FY26 BUILD award to reclaim the area above the highway for a marquee public space in Downtown Cincinnati.

Hamilton County, in close partnership with the City of Cincinnati, will use these grant funds to support the planning and design, advance engineering of the physical capping structure and associated safety systems, design the public space above and surrounding surface transportation safety improvements, and construct the first phase of this innovative project. The outcome of these efforts will bring us one step closer to achieving this long-planned physical reconnection of the city to the riverfront. This initiative will enhance economic development, improve safety for all modes of transportation, and improve the lives of our citizens.

We welcome your consideration of this grant application for funding from the FY 2026 BUILD Program and fully support its implementation to ensure the full scope of this much-needed project is delivered in a timely manner. I look forward to the successful completion of the ***Fort Washington Way Project: A Strategic Infrastructure Investment for Economic Growth*** and enhanced local and regional impact due to its completion.

Sincerely,



Jim Watkins
Triversity Construction



February 19, 2026

The Honorable Sean Duffy
Secretary, U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Duffy:

Re: FY 2026 Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD): Letter of Support for Hamilton County's Fort Washington Way Project: A Strategic Infrastructure Investment for Economic Growth

I am writing to support Hamilton County's application towards the FY 2026 Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) grant program for the *Fort Washington Way Project: A Strategic Infrastructure Investment for Economic Growth*. The project, a partnership between Hamilton County, the City of Cincinnati, and the Cincinnati Regional Chamber, will advance project delivery and construct an elevated cap structure over Interstate 71 / U.S. Route 50 (locally known as Fort Washington Way) between Vine Street and Walnut Street with room for all interior Tunnel Operating Systems to be built in the next phase. The cap will connect Cincinnati's central business district to our vibrant riverfront development, which is home to the Cincinnati Reds, the Cincinnati Bengals, Smale Riverfront Park and scores of businesses. The cap will create a safe space and implement a suite of roadway safety improvements.

Over the last 25 years, Cincinnati has seen an incredible revitalization of the riverfront into a regional destination for entertainment and recreation. Achieving this long-term vision was made possible by our community's 2000 project to narrow Fort Washington Way, opening up 45 acres of land for redevelopment and reconnecting the historic street grid over the highway. At this same time, Cincinnati laid the foundation – quite literally – for a future capping of Fort Washington Way. Hamilton County is now aiming to secure a FY26 BUILD award to reclaim the area above the highway for a marquee public space in Downtown Cincinnati.

Hamilton County, in close partnership with the City of Cincinnati, will use these grant funds to support the planning and design, advance engineering of the physical capping structure and associated safety systems, design the public space above and surrounding surface transportation safety improvements, and construct the first phase of this innovative project. The outcome of these efforts will bring us one step closer to achieving this long-planned physical reconnection of the city to the riverfront. This initiative will enhance economic development, improve safety for all modes of transportation, and improve the lives of our citizens.

We welcome your consideration of this grant application for funding from the FY 2026 BUILD Program and fully support its implementation to ensure the full scope of this much-needed project is delivered in a timely manner. I look forward to the successful completion of the *Fort Washington Way Project: A Strategic Infrastructure Investment for Economic Growth* and enhanced local and regional impact due to its completion.

Sincerely,

Bimal Patel
President & CEO
Rolling Hills Hospitality
859-360-0036
bimalp@rhhotels.com



Western & Southern
Financial Group

400 Broadway • Cincinnati, OH 45202-3341

John F. Barrett
Chairman of the Board
President and Chief Executive Officer

Direct line: 513-629-1105
Fax: 513-629-1233
john.barrett@westernsouthern.com

February 18, 2026

The Honorable Sean Duffy
Secretary, U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

**Re: Letter of Support for Hamilton County's Fort Washington Way Project: A Strategic
Infrastructure Investment for Economic Growth**

Dear Secretary Duffy:

You will be receiving a number of letters in support of Hamilton County's transformative Fort Washington Way project. In 1999, Charlie Luken, Cincinnati's mayor at the time, asked me to line up approximately \$10 million in private and public funding so the three blocks over Fort Washington Way could eventually be covered. I did so with the expectation that someday we would cap the highway and reunite Cincinnati's downtown and its riverfront.

I am hopeful that that day has arrived, and that you can get behind this important project. The Fort Washington Way caps will create greenspace, enhance roadway safety, support economic development and be a major boost to our great city. Your support of Hamilton County's application is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

JFB/dj

DISCLOSURE OF LOBBYING ACTIVITIES

Complete this form to disclose lobbying activities pursuant to 31 U.S.C.1352

OMB Number: 4040-0013

Expiration Date: 02/28/2025

1. * Type of Federal Action: ☐ a. contract ☒ b. grant ☐ c. cooperative agreement ☐ d. loan ☐ e. loan guarantee ☐ f. loan insurance	2. * Status of Federal Action: ☐ a. bid/offer/application ☒ b. initial award ☐ c. post-award	3. * Report Type: ☒ a. initial filing ☐ b. material change
4. Name and Address of Reporting Entity: ☒ Prime ☐ SubAwardee *Name County of Hamilton OH *Street 1 138 East Court Street, Room 603 Street 2 *City Cincinnati State OH: Ohio Zip 45202-1215 Congressional District, if known: OH 01		
5. If Reporting Entity in No.4 is Subawardee, Enter Name and Address of Prime: 		
6. * Federal Department/Agency: US Department of Transportation	7. * Federal Program Name/Description: BUILD CFDA Number, if applicable:	
8. Federal Action Number, if known: 	9. Award Amount, if known: \$	
10. a. Name and Address of Lobbying Registrant: Prefix *First Name Not Applicable Middle Name *Last Name Not Applicable Suffix *Street 1 Street 2 *City State Zip		
b. Individual Performing Services (including address if different from No. 10a) Prefix *First Name Phil Middle Name *Last Name Beck Suffix *Street 1 138 East Court Street Street 2 Room 603 *City Cincinnati State OH: Ohio Zip 45202		
11. Information requested through this form is authorized by title 31 U.S.C. section 1352. This disclosure of lobbying activities is a material representation of fact upon which reliance was placed by the tier above when the transaction was made or entered into. This disclosure is required pursuant to 31 U.S.C. 1352. This information will be reported to the Congress semi-annually and will be available for public inspection. Any person who fails to file the required disclosure shall be subject to a civil penalty of not less than \$10,000 and not more than \$100,000 for each such failure. * Signature:  Digitally signed by Jeff Aluotto Date: 2026.02.23 14:56:51 -05'00' *Name: Prefix Mr. *First Name Jeff Middle Name *Last Name Aluotto Suffix Title: Hamilton County Administrator Telephone No.: 513-946-4439 Date: 02/18/2026		
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