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Congress of the United States
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SUBCOMMITTEE ON DOMESTIC POLICY
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COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND LABOR

February 5, 2010

Hon. Victor M. Mendez
Administrator
Federal Highway Administrator
1200 New Jersey Ave. S.E.
Washington DC, D.C. 20590-9898

Dear Administrator Mendez:

I write today to ask for your attention and assistance with regard to Cleveland's Innerbelt, the section of I-90 which runs through the city's downtown area. Specifically, plans are underway to build a new bridge along I-90 over the Cuyahoga River. I am concerned that bad bureaucracy could get in the way of good planning and Cleveland will forever lose an opportunity to build the bridge which would best meet the people's needs.

On December 6, 2009, I wrote to ask Governor Strickland to include a separate roadway along the new Innerbelt bridge for bikes and pedestrians. I strongly believe that in this age of global climate change, we need to rethink our habits of treating the automobile as the only credible means of transportation. This type of thinking may have been in vogue in the post-war era of the 1940s and 1950s when our interstate highway system was conceived, but it is now obsolete. Downtown areas like Cleveland are experiencing a resurgence of people moving back into the city. Cities seek greater in-migration from young adults and families who choose to walk and bike to their nearby destinations. Urban planning for the 21st Century needs to reflect these trends.

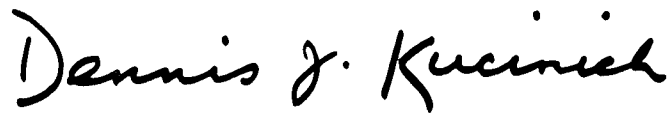
In response to my request, and a popular surge of support for bike and pedestrian access on the new proposed bridge, I am now hearing that the State of Ohio cannot veer from its path toward the current plans to exclude bikes and pedestrians. The State of Ohio cites fear of losing federal funding among other reasons for disregarding the need for non-fossil alternatives on the Innerbelt bridge.

We cannot expect the State of Ohio or any state to slavishly adhere to antiquated transportation planning because the people's needs were inadvertently ignored in the earlier stages of planning. The issue of bike and pedestrian access to this signature bridge must not be swept under the rug due to a bureaucratic snafu. If planning for the people's emerging transportation needs into the new century is the right thing to do, then we ought to do it and not be unduly tied to the planning mistakes of the past.

Based on my communications with the Ohio Department of Transportation, adding a roadway for bike and pedestrian traffic would add approximately \$20 million to a project expected to approach \$450 million. Considering the benefits to the region in opening up Cleveland's downtown area to greater bike and pedestrian use, I believe that the cost is marginal.

I ask that you immediately intervene to ensure that an otherwise excellent program to rebuild a needed bridge is allowed to move forward with amenities for bikes and pedestrians. I thank you for your consideration of the needs of the people of my state and your willingness to work with me to find ways to adequately and appropriately meet those needs. I will be in touch with you soon to follow up on this request and schedule a time when we can discuss this in further detail.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dennis J. Kucinich". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Dennis J. Kucinich
Member of Congress

DJK: mg