



CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

October 25, 2017

The Honorable Elaine L. Chao
U.S. Department of Transportation
Office of the Secretary
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590

RE: INFRA Grant Application Submitted by the City and County of Denver

Dear Secretary Chao,

As members of the National Western Center Citizens Advisory Committee (NWC-CAC), we enthusiastically support the City's efforts to relocate the Denver Rock Island Rail (DRIR) freight tracks away from the South Platte River, for the following critical reasons:

1. The proposed freight relocation will provide **incalculable community and environmental benefits**, including:
 - Opens up public access to a riverfront that has been inaccessible for over a century;
 - Allows for the extension of regional trails for both recreation and for commuting;
 - Helps improve community health by helping residents access nature and recreation opportunities;
 - Allows for river bank improvements that benefit water quality and create wildlife habitat;
 - Contributes to the revitalization of historically industrial communities of Globeville and Elyria-Swansea;
 - Creates environmental education opportunities for our youth;
 - Allows for east-west roadways and bridges to be built that will connect neighborhoods to the education, job and entertainment opportunities available at the new NWC.
2. Consolidating and upgrading freight tracks will **dramatically increase safety** in the following ways:
 - Consolidating and rebuilding freight infrastructure will virtually eliminate transportation conflicts and decrease the probability of freight derailments and accidents.
 - Creating a protected freight corridor will deter people from trespassing and walking along DRIR tracks.
 - Allows freight rail activity to co-exist safely with the expected 2.2 million annual visitors of the new National Western Center.



3. This project has **unprecedented bi-partisan support**. In November 2015 Denver voters overwhelmingly passed Ballot Measure 2C, which approved public funding to build the first two phases of the National Western Center. Over 80% of people polled listed the South Platte riverfront restoration as the primary reason for voting in favor of Measure 2C. Relocating the DRIR tracks away from the river is a critical step in creating open space and improving wildlife habitat along the South Platte River.

As an advisory committee composed of residents, property owners, business owners and partner organizations, we focus our efforts on advancing a bold new vision for the National Western Center – a vision that builds on Denver’s valued historical and cultural heritage as well as the beloved traditions and commercial success of the National Western Stock Show. Fortified by bipartisan support and collaborative public-private partnerships, we are hopeful that a key outcome of the NWC transformation will be safer and more efficient operations of DRIR freight rail in the north Denver Metro area.

The NWC Citizens Advisory Committee strongly encourages the U.S. Department of Transportation to award an INFRA grant to the City to relocate and rebuild freight infrastructure at the NWC for the mutual benefit of commerce, community, economy and the environment.

Sincerely,

Members of the National Western Center
Citizens Advisory Committee