



850 Euclid Avenue • Suite 1026 • Cleveland, OH 44114-3357
www.allaboardohio.org

November 14, 2013

Mr. John Cranley, Mayor-Elect
City Hall, 801 Plum Street
Cincinnati, OH 45202

Dear Mayor-Elect Cranley,

All Aboard Ohio congratulates you for your election victory to be the Mayor of Cincinnati. You clearly bring an impressive array of knowledge, experience and passion to this position. All Aboard Ohio is a statewide education and advocacy organization which celebrated its 40th anniversary this year. We work closely with local community leaders, elected officials, other organizations and grass roots supporters to bring better passenger rail and public transportation services to Ohio residents and visitors alike. One of our major goals is to improve train service to Cincinnati and southwest Ohio by increasing the current tri-weekly service of Amtrak's *Cardinal* to provide daily service. We are also very committed to an extension of the Chicago-Indianapolis *Hoosier State* to Cincinnati providing a daytime travel option to Indianapolis and Chicago. We would welcome a collaborative effort with the City to attain these goals.

We are, however, dismayed by your plan to cancel the Cincinnati streetcar project. This clearly seems to run counter to your campaign commitment to foster economic development in the city. Streetcars are increasingly recognized as a strong tool to assist urban revitalization. Portland, Seattle, Tacoma, Tampa, Little Rock, Dallas, and Kenosha have all built new streetcar lines. Portland, Seattle and Dallas are building on the success of their streetcars by constructing additional lines. New streetcar lines will open in the next few months in Atlanta, Washington DC, Salt Lake City and Tucson. Others are, or soon will be under-construction in St. Louis, Kansas City, Detroit, Fort Lauderdale, Oklahoma City and San Antonio. Historic streetcar lines have been restored and expanded in Philadelphia, New Orleans, Memphis and San Francisco. Cincinnati must compete with these cities for young people and jobs – the lifeblood of cities.

What all of these streetcar projects have in common is that they have attracted very significant new development and thousands of new residents to their city downtowns. Nearly \$2 billion in new development has occurred along the TECO streetcar line in Tampa. Even larger impacts can be seen in Portland and Seattle. In these cities, derelict warehouse and industrial areas have been revitalized as vibrant urban neighborhoods with thousands of new residents, new jobs, and lots of new office and retail investments. It is exciting to see rundown or dying neighborhoods become dynamic areas alive with residents, workers and visitors enjoying themselves in the many new activities that have developed along these streetcar lines. Enhanced livability is a key byproduct of these investments.

I have personally seen the benefits of streetcar projects having served on the Tampa project and represented the State of Washington in oversight of Seattle's initial streetcar line. The new energy and vitality that streetcars, and other rail transit modes, have brought to many US and Canadian cities is truly amazing. Cities and metropolitan regions that have developed good public transit services that include streetcar, light rail, rapid transit and commuter rail in addition to basic bus services have been able to attract new investment and population. Young people, university students, millennials and retirees have increasingly embraced public transportation and the lifestyle options; a national trend that continues to grow. Lack of investment in public transportation, and related infrastructure for bicycles and pedestrians puts Ohio metropolitan areas at a disadvantage.

We respectfully but strongly encourage you to re-examine your position on the Cincinnati streetcar. Please do not sell your citizens short. While canceling the streetcar may be possible, it will come with a high price. Construction contractors, suppliers, manufacturers of the streetcars and others will be in a position to file claims against the city, and pursue those through the courts. Small businesses and large developers who have planned investments along the route will be penalized. The federal funds allocated to the Cincinnati Streetcar come from funds designated for public transportation projects and in all likelihood cannot be reprogrammed for road and street projects. Cincinnati suffers from some degree of stigma for its failure to complete its subway project decades ago. Canceling the Cincinnati Streetcar would raise additional questions about the city's decision-making and ability to deliver projects.

We also remind you of the political blunder of Governor Kasich who returned \$400 million in high-speed rail funds to the federal government. Our neighbors in Michigan and Illinois have benefited from the Governor's decision; and travelers there can currently ride trains at speeds up to 110 mph on part of the routes between Chicago and Detroit and Chicago and St. Louis. Travel times will be cut significantly on these routes as further improvements are made over the next two years. If Cincinnati were to return the \$45 million in federal dollars, Kansas City, Fort Lauderdale, Washington DC, Detroit and others would be happy to use those funds. We don't think you should become the "Kasich" of rail transit.

Please, take the time to investigate why so many other cities are moving forward with streetcar projects. You don't need to take the Mallory Administration's word at face value. Verify for yourself the millions in private investment and development and the positive return-on-investment that each of these cities has or expects to experience. Ask if any of these cities have "buyer's remorse." Satisfy yourself whether each of these cities isn't better off because of their streetcar projects. Then, ask yourself, could it be that all of these cities – Portland, Seattle, Tacoma, Tampa, Little Rock, Dallas, Kenosha, Atlanta, Washington DC, Salt Lake City, Tucson, St. Louis, Kansas City, Detroit, Fort Lauderdale, Oklahoma City, San Antonio, Philadelphia, New Orleans, Memphis and San Francisco – possibly have all gotten it wrong? Further, could it be that not one city from this diverse list has anything in common with Cincinnati? We believe that if you take the time to conduct an objective review of these other systems, you will find that the streetcar project offers significant public, economic and social benefits to Cincinnati.

All Aboard Ohio would be happy to assist you and your staff as you work through the evaluation of costs and benefits. Our board members and staff include people experienced in streetcar, light rail, rapid transit, commuter rail, bus and transit oriented development topics. We strongly believe in the benefits of the Cincinnati Streetcar and hope that the Queen City will join the growing number of progressive American cities that are increasingly being recognized as more dynamic and livable places, thanks in part to investments in streetcars and other rail transit.

Sincerely,



Ronald C. Sheck, Chairman

cc: Mayor Mark Mallory
City Council members