



Stark State
COLLEGE

October 11, 2017

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

Office of the President

Dear Madam Secretary:

In keeping with our vision to be a “catalyst for economic development” in Northeast Ohio, Stark State College, the fourth largest of Ohio’s 23 public community/technical colleges, is pleased to support the TIGER grant application submitted by Northeast Ohio’s Stark, Carroll and Columbiana counties.

These counties have created a Regional Transportation Improvement Project (RTIP) under Ohio law with the goal of completing the improvement of U.S. Route 30 to the eastern edge of Ohio. The first step of the project is to bypass the city of East Canton, where heavy truck-trailer traffic now jogs twice through downtown. Construction would span from Trump Avenue NE in Canton to Ohio Route 44. It is a four-mile project estimated to cost \$90 million to \$100 million. The entire project is estimated at \$800 million to \$1 billion. The TIGER grant sought by the RTIP would support the necessary first step.

If this highway project were easy, it would have been completed over the last 30 years. In today’s environment, the Northeast Ohio counties working under the RTIP realize they have to create a local-government funding source for Route 30, and they are working to do so. They realize they have to create the conditions for a public-private partnership, and they are working to do so. It is a monumental undertaking; however, the energy to move forward has never been greater.

With the exception of Cleveland, which sits on the shore of Lake Erie, Canton is the only major manufacturing city in Ohio without four-lane highway access running north, south, east and west. U.S. Route 30 is a four-lane commercial highway from Chicago to Canton, Ohio, and a two-lane, winding and hilly country road for the 32 miles that takes it from Canton to the eastern edge of the state and the fringe of the Pittsburgh market. This condition stifles economic growth. The lack of a four-lane thoroughfare through the northern counties of the Utica Shale energy development in Ohio inhibits the shipment of manufactured goods from Canton and points west to the Ohio River port in Wellsville, Ohio. It also creates a tourism disadvantage for the \$700 million Johnson Controls Hall of Fame Village currently being developed at the Canton Pro Football Hall of Fame.

Furthermore, completing the improvement of U.S. Route 30 to the eastern edge of Ohio will provide safer and more efficient transportation for all. The project will also promote economic development, improving access to career and educational options, such as Stark State College’s Downtown Canton Satellite Center and Well Site Training Center, which are located right off of Route 30 and provide employer-driven training and educational opportunities for the shale industry.

For these reasons, Stark State College urges you and your department to grant financial support to this first stage of Route 30 improvement eastward from Canton. We recognize that the task of maintaining, improving and modernizing transportation systems in the United States is crucial and difficult work, and I thank you for your hard work and consideration.

Sincerely,

Para M. Jones, Ph.D.
President