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October 16, 2017

The Honorable Elaine Chao
Secretary of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Chao:

We urge your support for the application by the Regional Transportation Improvement Project (RTIP) serving Carroll, Columbiana and Stark counties for a TIGER grant to help fund the US 30, Trump Avenue to SR 44 highway construction project.

As you know, upgrading US 30 (the Lincoln Highway) across the state of Ohio has been an ongoing effort since the 1950s. The initiative has been driven by national, statewide, regional and local factors including the need to ensure highway safety, expansion of industry and economic development.

On a national level, US 30, extending from Oregon to New Jersey, is an integral part of the National Highway System. One of the primary purposes of the RTIP project is to continue the objective of developing the entire corridor as a primary highway, and ensuring its state of good repair.

On a regional level, the RTIP project will provide an efficient east/west route to link the eastern portion of Stark County with Carroll and Columbiana counties and the eastern Ohio/western Pennsylvania/West Virginia region. The project will improve the level of service for through and local traffic, and improve safety on US 30, which currently experiences crash rates considerably higher than statewide averages.

From an economic development standpoint, the RTIP project will foster economic growth in a rural region of the Appalachian Basin not currently served by an efficient east/west highway. It will support existing industry and future development through improved access to the region. In particular, this project will be very important to ensure the growth of the energy industry in the Marcellus and Utica shale play areas. This upgrade will provide opportunities to further expand our reach for workforce and talent regionally across the US 30 corridor in partnership with our OhioMeansJobs one-stop employment and training centers serving Stark and the surrounding counties.

Thank you for your consideration of this initiative.

Sincerely,

Jennifer M. Meek Eells
Executive Director