



People first. *Digital always.*

October 24, 2017

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

Dear Madam Secretary:

The Karcher Group, a digital agency offering online marketing and web development services since 1997 with offices in North Canton, Ohio and Columbia, SC, writes in support of an INFRA grant application submitted by Stark, Carroll and Columbiana counties in Northeast Ohio.

These counties have created a Regional Transportation Improvement Project under Ohio law with the goal of finally completing the improvement of U.S. Route 30 to the eastern edge of Ohio.

First step is to bypass the city of East Canton, where heavy truck-trailer traffic now jogs twice through downtown. This first step would run 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 INFRA 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 three 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. The energy to move forward has never been greater, however.

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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 to the eastern edge of the state and the fringe of the Pittsburgh market. This condition stifles economic growth. It denies a four-lane thoroughfare through the northern counties of the Utica Shale energy development in Ohio. It inhibits the shipment of manufactured goods from Canton, and points west, to the Ohio River port at Wellsville, Ohio. It creates a tourism disadvantage for the \$700 million Johnson Controls Hall of Fame Village under development around the Pro Football Hall of Fame in Canton. 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.

For all of these reasons, The Karcher Group 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. We wish you and your colleagues the very best in your endeavors.

Sincerely,



Geoff Karcher
President
The Karcher Group