

# STARK TUSCARAWAS WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD

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October 17, 2019

The Honorable Elaine Chao  
Secretary of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, S. E.  
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Secretary Chao,

As a workforce development leader in the Canton, Ohio region, I am writing to express strong support for the request by the Regional Transportation Improvement Project (RTIP), a public agency serving Carroll, Columbiana and Stark Counties, Ohio, for funding under the U.S. Department of Transportation's Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) Discretionary Grant program. This funding would be used to extend a critical US 30/Lincoln Highway expressway segment east of Canton in Stark County from Trump Avenue to SR 44. This highway corridor improvement project is critically important to promote highway safety, and has broad national implications for improving surface transportation, commerce, trade and quality of life to benefit businesses and communities in my region.

A US 30 expressway east of Canton will improve safety, especially for trucks. The expressway will avoid the curves and tight turns of the existing two-lane Route 30, which has concerning safety deficiencies. Because of increased risk of an accident, many trucking companies refuse to allow their drivers to operate trucks on the existing, winding Route 30, negatively affecting logistics efficiencies and transportation costs for regional businesses and consumers. Surveys of these companies indicate that their trucks' use of US 30 westbound from eastern Ohio – and likely from western Pennsylvania and northern West Virginia – would increase if the highway were upgraded.

The RTIP project will benefit businesses and communities, including rural counties in the Appalachian region, by improving highway access for movement associated with goods and services, including commerce related to the oil and gas industry in the Marcellus and Utica shale regions. These regions are currently the focus of plans for major expansion of operations by oil and gas, chemicals and plastics industries, requiring reliable truck access.

Extending the US 30 expressway east of Canton has the potential to pull additional traffic through Stark and Columbiana counties and generate economic growth, new business opportunities and jobs for local companies and residents along this route. I respectfully request that you authorize Department of Transportation approval for this important project.

Sincerely,

Jennifer M. Meek Eells  
Executive Director