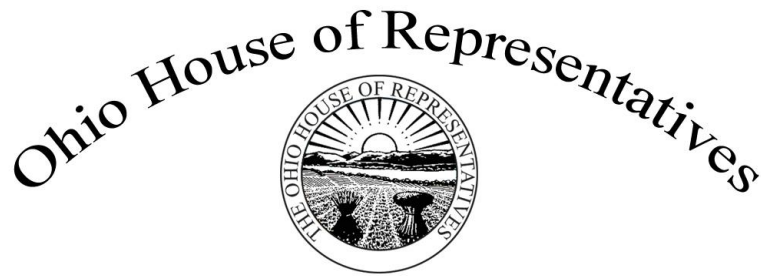


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93rd House District
Gallia, Jackson, Lawrence and
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Ryan Smith
State Representative
133rd General Assembly

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

June 27, 2019

Dear Secretary Chao,

On behalf of the Gallia County Engineer's Office, I am writing to express my strong support for the Rural Paving and Infrastructure Gateway Project. This project seeks to improve the quality of life for countless residents of southeast Ohio through improved transportation routes that will in turn benefit the region's healthcare, education, and economic development sectors. The grant money will be utilized to resurface nearly 130 miles of existing gravel and dirt roads with a new, innovative pavement formulated through a research partnership with Ohio University.

Over the last few decades, southeast Ohio has faced devastating job losses, particularly in the energy industry. In order to put Appalachian Ohio on a par with the rest of Ohio and the nation, dynamic solutions such as this are necessary to boost an area in need. This project will help to combat decreased economic activity by energizing the existing industries and communities throughout the region. As a lifelong resident of Gallia County, and as someone who has represented the region for over six years, I can attest first-hand to the urgency for such an undertaking and the positive, widespread effect it will have on growth and development.

Tourism and agriculture are two of the largest contributors to southeast Ohio's economy. Better transportation routes will result in increased tourism from outside the area as well as faster delivery times for farmers. Air quality is also a concern for residents who reside along and utilize the region's rural, unpaved routes daily, as various lung diseases such as asthma are associated with prolonged exposure to dirt and dust particles. Thus, resurfaced roads would mean better air quality, enhanced commercial activity, greater economic productivity, and ultimately safer travel.

Once again, I urge your support of the Rural Paving and Infrastructure Gateway Project and the many benefits it will provide to the citizens of southeast Ohio. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you would like to discuss this matter further.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ryan Smith".

Ryan Smith
Ohio House of Representatives