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93rd House District
Representing
Gallia, Jackson,
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Ryan Smith
Speaker, Ohio House of Representatives
132nd General Assembly

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

July 16, 2018

Dear Secretary Chao,

On behalf of the Gallia County Engineer's Office, I am writing to express my strong support for the Southeast Ohio Innovative Smart Connection Project. This project would create a "smart" east to west corridor in southeast Ohio to help the region prepare for emerging transportation needs, alleviate traffic congestion, and promote economic development. The benefits of this project would go beyond Ohio, and would positively affect businesses and communities in both West Virginia and Kentucky.

My family happens to live just a few miles from the site of the proposed corridor. As someone who travels these roads daily, I often observe the congestion on State Route 7 and the issues it causes for residents. This project would create a bypass to alleviate such gridlock while also expanding new areas for growth and development. Moreover, U.S. route 35 has consistently seen year over year increases in commercial truck traffic. The project would increase needed parking space for drivers to rest and refuel, ensuring greater safety on the road and making the route more appealing for companies to transport their goods.

As you know, the transportation sector is currently undergoing immense change via the introduction of new autonomous vehicle technology. In order to meet the needs of our nation's growing commercial sector, and the demands that new activity brings, areas such as southeast Ohio must invest in necessary upgrades now before it is too late. Numerous components of this project would involve public-private partnerships with entities from across southeast Ohio and the greater tri-state region. The addition of electric charging stations and fiber optic connections along the corridor will enable further expansion of the Drive Ohio Autonomous Vehicle Project and continue Ohio's national leadership in autonomous transportation technology.

Once again, I urge your support of the Southeast Ohio Innovative Smart Connection Project. Southeast Ohio has seen unfortunate economic trends in recent decades, however, it is my hope that this investment in the region's future will contribute to a revitalization in economic development while enhancing safety and innovation. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you would like to discuss this matter further.

Sincerely,

Ryan Smith
Speaker, Ohio House of Representatives