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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510 3505

July 18, 2018

Secretary Elaine Chao
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Secretary Chao:

As the U.S. Department of Transportation considers applications for the Better Utilizing Investment to Leverage Development (BUILD) Transportation Discretionary Grant Program, I would like to draw your attention to the application submitted by Gallia County Engineer's Office and the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) for the Southeast Ohio Innovation Smart Connection.

The Southeast Ohio Innovative Smart Connection would add an interchange along US Route 35, using existing overpass bridges and rest area ramps, and develop a bypass route for State Route 7, using Bob Evans Highway/Farm Road to ameliorate the impacts of flooding. In addition, this project will install fiber optics along US 35/Bob Evans Highway/Farm Road bypass route in order to facilitate a two-lane testing route for autonomous vehicles. US 35 is a frequent route for heavy trucks and this construction will enhance capacity, reduce Congestion, and improve the transportation of goods in the region.

The project would also include two electric charging stations and develop a smart trucking rest area. The electric charging stations and the fiber optics installation will move forward using an innovative public/private partnership. The fiber optics will enhance connectivity and support Drive Ohio's autonomous vehicle project, ensuring the rural areas along the Ohio River in Ohio, West Virginia, and Kentucky, are able to provide rural testing tracks and for innovative new technology.

There is widespread regional support for the Southeast Ohio Innovative Smart Connection. Gallia County has worked with ODOT, the Appalachian Regional Commission, Eastern Federal Lands, the US Department of Agriculture, the Federal Highway Administration, American Electric Power, and Horizon on a number of infrastructure improvements in Southeast Appalachian region.

Please give the Southeast Ohio Innovative Smart Connection full and fair consideration as you evaluate applications for BUILD Grant awards. For additional questions, please contact Leah_Hill@brown.senate.gov in my office.

Sincerely,



Sherrod Brown
United States Senator