



July 3, 2019

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

**Re: Support for the Rural Paving and Infrastructure Gateway Project**

Dear Secretary Chao:

The purpose of this letter is to express our support for the BUILD grant application submitted by the Gallia County, Ohio Engineer's Office aimed at raising the quality of life for "at risk residents" by replacing 130+ miles of stone/dirt county roads with a hard surface using an innovative pavement design developed through a research project with Ohio University. The pavement design will save a substantial amount of money. Nearly all 400 square miles are in coal strip mine territory. As of 2016, all coal companies were forced to close in Southeastern Ohio impacting opportunity to the region.

Many of these roads see constant closures, stranding residents of access to their jobs, medical care, schools, grocery stores, emergency response time, etc. in many cases for several days. Such closures have a substantial effect on survival of farms during harvest time, especially when having difficulty delivering their products to market due to the road closures.

Infrastructure improvements in Southeastern Ohio and raising the quality of life for some our most economically disadvantaged citizens is important to Ohio.

We respectfully request that the U.S. Department of Transportation consider the importance of these critical improvements to the prosperity of southeastern Ohio.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jack Marchbanks".

Jack Marchbanks, Ph.D., Director