

SHERROD BROWN  
OHIO

COMMITTEES:  
AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION,  
AND FORESTRY  
BANKING, HOUSING,  
AND URBAN AFFAIRS  
FINANCE  
VETERANS' AFFAIRS

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510 - 3505

July 9, 2019

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

Dear Secretary Chao:

I write to draw your attention to the application submitted by the Gallia County Engineer's Office and the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) for the Better Utilizing Investment to Leverage Development (BUILD) Transportation Discretionary Grant Program for the Southeast Ohio Innovative Smart Connection.

Funding for the Southeast Ohio Innovative Smart Connection will be used to develop an interchange along US Route 35, using existing overpass bridges and rest area ramps. It will also build a bypass route for State Route 7, using Bob Evans Highway/Farm Road. The new interchange and bypass route will reduce the impacts of flooding. US 35 is a frequent route for heavy trucks, and the Southeast Ohio Innovation Smart Connection will enhance capacity, reduce congestion, and improve the transportation of goods in the region.

In addition to the interchange and bypass, the project would also install two electric charging stations and develop a smart trucking rest area. And it would create a two-lane testing route for autonomous vehicles by installing fiber optics along the US 35/Bob Evans Highway/Farm Road bypass route. The project sponsors will use public/private partnerships in the installation of the electric charging stations and the fiber optics. This project will enhance connectivity in the region, and ensure that rural areas along the Ohio River Valley in Ohio, West Virginia, and Kentucky are able to provide rural testing tracks and innovative new technology to support Drive Ohio's autonomous vehicle project. .

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 U.S. Department of Agriculture the Federal Highway Administration, American Electric Power, and Horizon on a number of infrastructure improvements in the Southeast Appalachian region. I strongly urge the Department of Transportation to give this application full and fair consideration and ask that you please keep my office informed on the status of the application.

Sincerely,



Sherrod Brown  
United States Senator