



July 16, 2018

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

Southeast Ohio Innovative Smart Connection

Dear Secretary Chao,

On behalf of Connected Nation and Connect Ohio, I enthusiastically write today to provide my unconditional support, and respectfully request your attention to, the Southeast Ohio Innovative Smart Connection project application. The project consists of: 1) adding an interchange along US Route 35 while utilizing an existing overpass bridge and four rest-area ramps and 2) developing a State Route 7 bypass route along Bob Evans Highway/Farm Road to alleviate costly impacts to businesses and residents from flooding and congestion.

When compared to the rest of the state and much of the nation, Ohio's Appalachian region of Southeast Ohio remains severely disadvantaged and in need infrastructure investment for job creation and workplace development. Approval of this project will ensure long-term economic growth for the region, as well as improving the local economy. Completion of this project will have an immediate impact on retaining and growing our commercial base and also secure continued future benefit by providing for autonomous vehicle testing. Additional safety for truck drivers is provided by "smart" parking and by providing innovation with the installation of electric charging stations.

I strongly urge your support of this application and ask that your office give this request every consideration. Thank you for your attention to this matter and please feel free to contact me directly should you have any questions or require additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Stuart V. Johnson", is written over the typed name.

Stuart V. Johnson
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