



July 17, 2018

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 Appalachia Ohio Gateway Project BUILD Application

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" according to Appalachian Regional Commission 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. In addition, the project will provide main line fiber connections for secondary road vehicle testing, impacting over 400 square miles of Southeastern Ohio. 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.

Nearly 90% of the complaints in Southeastern Ohio, are due to poor air quality on stone and dirt roads. Dust from these roads during the summer have attributed to severe breathing problems including asthma and dust allergies among children and adults. Dust has been linked to lung cancer, asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and silicosis. These diseases cause permanent disability and early death.

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,


Jerry Wray
Director