

July 16, 2018

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

Dear Ms. Chao:

I am writing this letter in support of the Providing Access and Connecting Rural Areas and Farming Communities throughout the Southeastern Ohio Region with the Rest of the State project that is being submitted for the Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) funding for this round of funding.

The project consists of raising 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.

As the Executive Director of the Ohio Valley Regional Development Commission (OVRDC) which serves as the Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RTPO) for Gallia County and 10 other counties in southern Ohio, I strongly support your consideration of the Providing Access and Connecting Rural Areas and Farming Communities throughout the Southeastern Ohio Region with the Rest of the State project for this round of BUILD funding.

Sincerely,



John W. Hemmings III
Executive Director