

February 25, 2019

Secretary Elaine L. Chao
United State Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Chao:

On behalf of Appalachian Partnership, Inc. a regional economic development organization serving Appalachian Ohio, I am writing to support the Ohio Department of Transportation's application for the Infrastructure for Rebuilding America (INFRA) grant to fund the Appalachian Opportunity Corridor Project in southern Ohio. This application is being co-sponsored by the Clermont County Transportation Improvement District. The Appalachian Opportunity Corridor – also known as Corridor D of the Appalachian Development Highway System – includes portions of Ohio State Route 32 and US Route 50 and connects the Cincinnati metro region with Bridgeport, West Virginia, in the heart of Appalachia.

Investment along this critical roadway is critical to the economic future of communities in Appalachian Ohio that have struggled for decades and are currently impacted by loss of coal-related jobs. It would provide a meaningful combination of both economic and safety benefits to those who use this corridor, which is a principal arterial for the movement of people, goods and services throughout the state, and is one of the highest-volume local routes in Ohio.

Specifically, the Appalachian Opportunity Corridor Project will:

- Extend the opportunities created by the Cincinnati Region's growing economy eastward into Appalachia;
- Manage the growth in traffic that will be at an estimated 79,000 vehicles per day by 2030
- Ease congestion by eliminating traffic-stalling intersections and traffic lights, replacing them with an interchange;
- Provide important safety enhancements to the supporting local roadway networks;
- Create the type of surface transportation infrastructure that businesses demand;
- Leverage the 14 federally-designated Opportunity Zones that are contiguous or adjacent to the Corridor in Ohio and that comprise more than 447,000 acres.

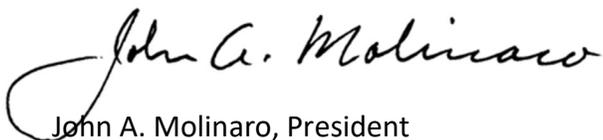
- Enhance the viability of major future employment centers located to the east of Cincinnati, such as the South Afton Industrial Park in Clermont County and the Mt. Orab Megasite in Brown County (representing a combined 1,285 acres of real estate);
- Support one of Ohio's most underserved regions, which currently has among the highest unemployment rates in the state, largely due to poor connectivity and a lack of access to jobs along the corridor;
- Boost Ohio Appalachian communities, such as Jackson, Waverly, Athens and Marietta, making them more attractive sites for future employers because they will be located near an increasingly important and thriving corridor.
- Help retain more than 3000 logistics-dependent jobs along the Appalachian Ohio stretches of the corridor that are being threatened by the growing congestion that would be relieved by the project.

In addition, this much-needed investment would come at a critical time, as the Ohio Department of Transportation evaluates further safety improvements to support the movement of traffic. Within the past year, there have unfortunately been two fatalities in this area designated for improvement.

For all of these reasons, I respectfully request that the Ohio Department of Transportation's application for the Appalachian Opportunity Corridor Project receive full consideration and be funded.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John A. Molinaro". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "J".

John A. Molinaro, President
Appalachian Partnership, Inc.