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Executive Director

May 18, 2020

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

Dear Madam Secretary,

I am writing to you today to express the support of the Ohio Turnpike and Infrastructure Commission for the Western Reserve Port Authority's application for funding in the FY20 BUILD Discretionary Grants Program. Funding will be used for the Lordstown Smart Logistics Hub, a strategic infrastructure initiative to capitalize on Lordstown, Ohio's location at the intersection of multiple modes of transportation, including the 241-mile Ohio Turnpike, and to position the area as the premier regional warehousing and distribution hub.

Investing in this project would help invigorate northeast Ohio, particularly the Mahoning Valley and Lordstown areas that were sharply impacted by economic downturns. The Lordstown Smart Logistics Hub will be the leading electrified multi-modal freight corridor in the Midwest, integrating emerging technologies – including electrification, automated and connected vehicles – deployed along regional corridors and in a future-focused yard to address industry needs and deliver significant improvements in transportation safety, mobility, access, and reliability.

In support of the Lordstown Smart Logistics Hub, the adjacent Ohio Turnpike is committed to developing an electrified, integrated interchange at Lordstown. In addition, our adjacent roadway features 160 miles of three lanes in both directions (the longest continuous stretch in Ohio) and eight interchanges that have Long-Combination Vehicle (LCV) lots that are perfect for staging freight operations. We are also currently modernizing our Toll Collection System to enable greater efficiency for freight movement. The new TCS is scheduled to go live in late 2022.

Along the Ohio Turnpike, we continue to leverage and upgrade an existing 241 miles of fiber optic cable, which provides a unique asset that other nationally significant corridors do not yet have. The Commission recently installed and tested a 60-mile section of DSRC-equipped infrastructure and vehicles. As a result, we are uniquely positioned to assist the project team with technical aspects of the Hub. The Ohio Turnpike also recently installed four sets of electric vehicle charging stations at two sets of service plazas and is negotiating an agreement with EV companies to install more EV charging stations including near the proposed Hub.

In addition, we are partnering with Ford Motor Company on a cellular-vehicle to-everything (C-V2X) proof-of-concept and we are expanding Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) with implementation beginning in 2021. These include, but are not limited to, an Advanced Traffic Management System (ATMS), Strategically placed Dynamic Message Signs (DMS), Traveler Information, cellular network alerts/notifications, Closed-Circuit Television Cameras (CCTV), Road Weather Information System (RWIS) and Smart Work Zones (CCTV and variable speed limits).

The Lordstown Smart Logistics Hub will leverage the Ohio Turnpike's existing and future investment in transportation infrastructure, and the private investment by companies such as General Motors (GM) & LG Chem, Lordstown Motors Corporation, and TJX Homegoods, to name a few. On behalf of the Commission, I respectfully urge you to give the Western Reserve Port Authority's grant application your fullest consideration and support as it presents a catalytic opportunity to bring investment to the Mahoning Valley (aka "Voltage Valley") to aid in the region's ongoing economic recovery.

Respectfully,

Ferzan M. Ahmed, P.E.
Executive Director