May 15, 2020

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

Dear Secretary Chao,

Team NEO is a business and economic development organization focused on accelerating economic growth and job creation throughout the 18 counties of Northeast Ohio. Developing a strong inventory of readily marketable sites aligned with needs of core industries in our region is a strategic imperative that will improve our Northeast Ohio's economic competitiveness. Our deep manufacturing roots, transportation assets, and ready access to a very large market of manufacturers and distributors makes Northeast Ohio an ideal location for business investment.

I am writing to you today to express my support for the Western Reserve Port Authority's application for funding in the FY20 Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) Transportation Discretionary Grants Program. Funding will be used for the Lordstown Smart Logistics Hub, a strategic infrastructure initiative to capitalize on Lordstown's location at the intersection of multiple modes of transportation, broadband, and electrification to position the area as the premier regional warehousing and distribution hub.

The Lordstown Smart Logistics Hub will be a critical asset to the region and a strong catalyst for further economic investment. The ample readily available sites in the area will be a key to attracting new investment capable of generating attractive investment return and creating new jobs. Team NEO will support the hub through data driven marketing and targeted outreach to companies across the globe that would see value in unique assets this Hub represents.

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 deliver significant improvements in transportation safety, mobility, access, and reliability. Improvements will include an intermodal rail connection at Ohio Commerce Center, an autonomous truck circulator route, consolidation of the current split interchange configuration along the Ohio Turnpike at Lordstown, and a transfer yard for trailers at the Ohio Turnpike Lordstown interchange.

Further, the Lordstown Smart Logistics Hub would build off the existing 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.

I 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 federal dollars to the Mahoning Valley to aid in the region's ongoing economic recovery.

Respectfully,

William R. Koehler
Chief Executive Officer