

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-3813

December 4, 2019

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

Dear Secretary Chao,

As elected officials, business owners, and community leaders from central Pennsylvania, we thank you for your commitment to rural infrastructure. Specifically, we were encouraged by the announcement of the Department's newest initiative, Rural Opportunities to Use Transportation for Economic Success (ROUTES).

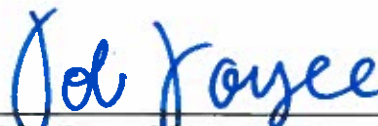
As you are aware, rural transportation networks are critically important to our nation's economy. Yet many projects get overlooked or postponed due to a wrongful assumption that they lack a worthwhile economic benefit. As you work to address the unique needs of rural America, we respectfully request your office's assistance with a project which would greatly impact central Pennsylvania.

Our region has recently benefited from an increased presence of manufacturers, warehouses, distribution centers and fulfillment centers. While these facilities have brought economic growth and revitalization, our roads and highways were not designed to handle the increasing levels of traffic and vehicle weight. The business community is rapidly evolving to meet the economy's changing needs, but our growth is undoubtedly hindered by a lack of adequate infrastructure and opportunities are often diverted to more urban hubs because of these deficiencies. Additionally, the last 5.5 miles of incomplete highway have heightened safety issues.

To address the above-mentioned concerns and allow Somerset County, Cambria County, and the surrounding communities to maximize the region's economic potential, we have long sought to connect Interstate 68 with the Pennsylvania Turnpike through the completion of Route 219. However, we lack the necessary resources to compete with our urban counterparts for adequate funding. Any guidance your office can provide as we explore appropriate opportunities to address these needs would be greatly appreciated.

Thank you again for your attention to rural infrastructure. We look forward to working with you to advance economic opportunities through rural development.

Sincerely,



John Joyce, M.D.
Member of Congress

Ron Aldom
Executive Director
Somerset County Chamber of Commerce

Joshua E. Boland
Executive Director
Somerset County Economic Development Council

Thomas C. Chernisky
Cambria County Commissioner

G. Henry Cook
Chairman of the Board and CEO
Somerset Trust Company

Colleen R. Dawson
Somerset County Commissioner-Elect

Matthew D. Dowling
Pennsylvania State Representative

Steven K. Howsare
Executive Director
Southern Alleghenies Planning and
Development Commission

Scott W. Hunt
Cambria County Commissioner-Elect

William "B.J." Smith
Cambria County Commissioner

Patrick J. Stefano
Pennsylvania State Senator

Linda R. Thomson
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Pamela Tokar-Ickes
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Mark J. Wissinger
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