

March 5, 2019

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

**Re: Support for the Mississippi Department of Transportation's (MDOT) FY 2019
INFRA Grant Application**

Dear Secretary Chao:

The construction of the Mississippi SR 76 Freight and Capacity Improvement Project in Itawamba County, Mississippi will improve the safety, efficiency and reliability within a critical developing segment of the NHS and a key connector to the US 78 (I-22) Tier 1 Freight Corridor on the Mississippi Freight Network. The proposed project will construct a new 8.3-mile segment of a four (4) lane Principal Arterial facility and will complete the Appalachian Development Highway System in Mississippi. The completion of this project will serve as an economic catalyst to the developing automobile manufacturing industry corridor anchored by the Toyota assembly plant currently in production near Blue Springs, MS and the Toyota-Mazda joint production facility under construction near Huntsville, AL.

This letter serves as my formal support for this needed project and I encourage the USDOT to award the requested \$57.6 million of Nationally Significant Freight and Highway Project INFRA Grant FY 2019 funds to this important project. The INFRA funds will also leverage \$38.4 million of MDOT federal and state program funds for the project.

Our financial institution is proud to have been serving rural Northeast MS and Northwest AL since 1908 and I can attest to the importance of this project specifically to the counties of Itawamba and Tishomingo in MS and Franklin and Marion Counties in Alabama but more importantly our two states as a whole! I am confident that both Mississippi and Alabama will jointly benefit from the completion of this road project. At present with the use of ARC funds, Alabama Highway 24 also known as the the Corridor V Project is a beautiful 4 lane road that stretches from Decatur, Alabama to the Mississippi state line. Unfortunately, the four lane road ends at a 2-lane road in Mississippi. The 8.3 mile stretch of highway that is lacking being completed is the final step in fully launching an economic engine for our state. The City of Red Bay, where I am fortunate to be an elected official is proud to boast industries such as Tiffin Motor Homes, Inc, Sunshine Industries and Gates Rubber; among others. With our large manufacturing base, a large amount of truck traffic uses

the aforementioned roads as well as thousands of tourists who come back to Red Bay each year to have their motor homes serviced. From my background in the business community, there are many opportunities for new industry to locate upon our road both in Alabama and Mississippi but each business we meet with always mentions the unfinished four lane as the largest draw back to making the investment. It is critical that Mississippi Department of Transportation finish this 8.3-mile section of highway which I am convinced will benefit our area with an economic boom. We are well positioned to attract Toyota and or Mazda suppliers from being between the Huntsville, Al and Blue Springs MS, which are future and current locations of these companies. We must however have the infrastructure that will benefit these companies that have made significant investments in our two states as well as to be able to attract suppliers to our area with a completed road.

I appreciate the leadership role the MSDOT has taken in working to get this project completed. It will however take your help to achieve their goals. I hope you can see the importance of completing this road project and respectfully request that you approve the aforementioned grant projects to the MSDOT.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter and if you have questions or need additional information regarding my support for MDOT's FY 2019 INFRA grant application for this project in Itawamba County, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Brad M. Bolton
President/CEO
Community Spirit Bank
Serving our Communities Since 1908

Cc:
Honorable Representative Robert Aderholt

Honorable Senator Richard Shelby

Honorable Senator Doug Jones

Honorable Senator Roger Wicker

Honorable Senator Cindy Hyde-Smith

Honorable Representative Trent Kelly

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