

May 12, 2008

James G. Beasley, P.E., P.S., Director  
Ohio Department of Transportation  
1980 W. Broad Street  
Columbus, OH 43223

Re: State Route 16 and Cherry Valley Road Intersection

Dear Director Beasley:

In October of 2005, a group of business and government leaders appeared before the TRAC to share concerns about the traffic congestion and safety issues caused by the State Route 16 and Cherry Valley Road intersection located in Licking County at the east end of the State Route 161 expansion. Following is a brief review of the circumstances prompting our concerns.

1. The Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) is funding a project that will convert the westernmost segment of the State Route 161/37/16/36 macro-corridor to a limited access highway from New Albany to Granville. This project will be completed in 2009. Unfortunately, the limits of this project did not extend to the Cherry Valley Road intersection. It was in the original plan, but was subsequently pulled. Therefore, the existing at-grade, signalized intersection will remain.

To address this last at-grade intersection between Columbus and Newark, the Licking County Area Transportation Study (LCATS) applied to the TRAC for \$5,000,000 for a project study. However, the project did not receive funding.

2. The Cherry Valley intersection/interchange is the connection point between a state macro corridor and the Thornwood Drive Corridor. The Thornwood Drive Corridor begins at the south side of Heath at the Beaver Run connector and continues to Thornwood Drive then north to the Cherry Valley intersection with State Route 16. The Beaver Run Road connector opened in 2007 and was funded through an earmark in the most recent Federal Transportation Bill. The Thornwood Corridor has significant economic development opportunities for the region. Both the cities of Newark and Heath have designated this area for future manufacturing and industrial development. LCATS has budgeted a substantial portion of their funding to improving and upgrading this corridor. A consultant is currently under contract for design services. Funds have been designated for right of way acquisition and construction in future years.
3. The SR 161/37 project is a high priority to LCATS and the jurisdictions it represents. These three distinct but integrated projects (161/37, Thornwood Drive Corridor, and Cherry Valley) will (1) reduce congestion along State Routes 161, 16, 37 & 79; (2) improve air quality; (3) reduce accidents and injuries; and (4) strengthen the region's economy. The State Route 16/Cherry Valley Road intersection currently operates at a LOS E – near failure, and will operate at a LOS F – failure, in the near future.

Given the improvements to the 161/37/16 corridor east and west of this intersection, the intersection functions like the neck of an hour glass constricting the flow of traffic and commerce through the center of Licking County. It is especially alarming that the accident rate continues to climb, and even more disturbing is the fact that 50% of the rear end accidents result in injuries. Furthermore, the State Route

16/Cherry Valley Road intersection is among the worst intersections in Licking County, and more importantly, it is the only intersection in this group that does not have a plan to fix it.

On a larger scale, the State Route 16/Cherry Valley Road intersection is one of four target projects identified by the recently formed Columbus – Pittsburg Corridor Committee. The committee is composed of elected officials and business leaders, and its mission is to create a limited access highway from Columbus to Pittsburg. When completed, it will open significant economic development opportunities for central Ohio.

Since the presentation to TRAC in 2005, using LCATS funds, a consultant was hired to complete steps 1-4 of the Project Development Process. Currently, there is an ODOT preferred conceptual alternative and a completed Strategic Plan for the SR 16 and Cherry Valley intersection to be replaced by an interchange to the east of the current at grade intersection. However, for the project to continue, additional funding will be required. To progress the project through stage 2 design and right of way plans will cost approximately 2-2.5 million. The intent of the community is to continue to move forward with this project. Accordingly, we are requesting the release of the \$2 million earmark obtained by Congressman Pat Tiberi in the 2005 SAFETEA-LU Federal Transportation Bill.

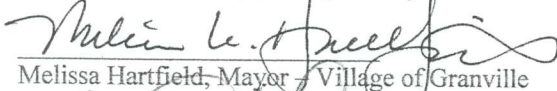
Your prompt assistance in releasing these funds would be greatly appreciated.

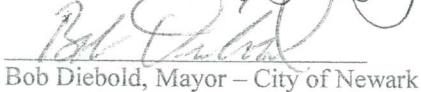
Sincerely,

  
Tim Bubb, Licking County Commissioner

  
Doug Smith, Licking County Commissioner

  
Mark A. Van Buren, Licking County Commissioner

  
Melissa Hartfield, Mayor – Village of Granville

  
Bob Diebold, Mayor – City of Newark

Cc: Congressman Pat Tiberi  
Congressman Zack Space  
Senator Joy Padgett