



## Commonwealth of Kentucky Transportation Cabinet

**Matthew G. Bevin, Governor**

**Greg Thomas, Secretary**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Media Contact: Betty Hull**

859-414-5232

[betty@rasormarketing.com](mailto:betty@rasormarketing.com)

**Naitore Djigbenou**

502-226-0007

[Naitore.Djigbenou@ky.gov](mailto:Naitore.Djigbenou@ky.gov)

### **U.S. Secretary of Transportation Elaine L. Chao Joins Kentucky Transportation Cabinet at Celebration of Proposed \$67.5 Million Grant for I-71/75 Boone County Interchange Improvements** *Federal grant will fund three major infrastructure projects that will provide for safer travel, faster drive times and better connections to jobs*

**FRANKFORT, Ky. (Aug. 24, 2018)** – U.S. Secretary of Transportation Elaine L. Chao joined Kentucky Transportation Cabinet Secretary Greg Thomas, U.S. Representative Thomas Massie, Boone County Judge Executive Gary Moore, and other business leaders and officials today at the Boone County campus of Gateway Community and Technical College to celebrate a proposed \$67.5 million Infrastructure for Rebuilding America (INFRA) grant. One of only 20 large INFRA grants in the U.S., the money will fund work vitally important to regional mobility and job creation.

The funding will allow the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet (KYTC) to invest in three major infrastructure projects along I-71/75 in Boone County. The projects will improve safety, ease congestion and provide better connections to jobs. They also will improve the movement of goods and services throughout this growing economic hub, which is a major corridor along the National Highway Freight Network.

“These investments in key infrastructure for Northern Kentucky will increase economic development, improve the quality of life and help create jobs for the hard-working people of this region,” said Secretary Chao.

#### **Strong Partnerships Provide a Model for Infrastructure Investment**

The Boone County infrastructure projects showcase how partnerships at the federal, state and local level can reap benefits for an entire region. Overall, the projected future cost of the interchange improvements is \$150.9 million, with the majority of funding coming from the federal INFRA grant and other Federal Highway Administration funds. Approximately 25 percent of the project is being funded with state and local dollars, a significant commitment that played an important role in the evaluation of Kentucky’s INFRA application.

“We are fortunate to have a strong partnership with the U.S. Department of Transportation who saw how committed we are to investing in the efficient movement of people, goods and services in our region,” said Secretary Thomas. “I would like to thank Gov. Matt Bevin for his support of this project and Transportation Secretary Chao for her continued

partnership in moving Kentucky's infrastructure forward. This funding will allow us to make critical roadway improvements in Northern Kentucky that will improve safety and spur additional job creation throughout the region."

Echoing the importance of collaboration in securing the competitive nationwide grant, Rep. Massie added, "The INFRA grant is an important supplement to leverage the financial buy-in at the state and local level to pursue projects that yield economic and safety benefits. Kentucky serves as a model of how partnerships between federal and local governments help move infrastructure forward."

### **Regional Economic Boom and Population Growth Fuel Transportation Needs**

Boone County is one of the fastest growing counties in Kentucky — expanding at a rate four times the national average — with a population of nearly 120,000 that is projected to double by the year 2050.

"We're experiencing unprecedented growth in Boone County," said Boone County Judge Executive Gary Moore. "The new interchanges this grant will support at the Mt. Zion and Richwood exits add capacity and improve safety for residents and businesses. At the same time local funding will work to address other critical infrastructure needs throughout our area."

Since January 2013, nearly 80 manufacturing, service and technology companies have announced new locations or expansions in the county, and more growth is expected.

- In January 2017, **Amazon** announced it will build a \$1.49 billion shipping hub to serve its fleet of Prime Air planes at the Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky International Airport.
- Kentucky-based **Verst Logistics** also announced expansion near the airport, creating up to 300 jobs at a new 396,000-square-foot e-commerce fulfillment center.
- **DHL** has planned a \$108 million expansion.
- **Kroger** has announced a \$60 million expansion in the county.
- **FedEx** invested \$150 million in a four-phase facility expansion estimated to add 4,600 truck trips daily via the KY 536 interchange.

"Our location in Boone County allows Verst to distribute products to roughly 85 percent of the U.S. within two days," said Verst Chief Commercial Officer Natalie Putnam. "These improvements will aid in the delivery of our mission to move goods and services for businesses, which helps keep our regional economy strong."

### **Three Major Projects Will Provide for Better Connections and Safer Travel**

The three new projects along I-71/75 include improvements at the Mt. Zion Road (KY 536) interchange and Richwood Road (KY 338) interchange, as well as provide additional merging lanes on the interstate from Mt. Zion Road to US 42. Currently, the number of crashes at both the Mt. Zion and Richwood interchanges is higher than the statewide average for similar roads. Delays also are significant, especially during peak travel times.

Both the Mt. Zion and Richwood interchanges will be reconfigured as double crossover diamonds (DCDs), meaning the east- and westbound travel lanes on KY 536 and KY 338 will cross each other, travel under the overpass with I-71/75 and then cross back to the right side of the roadway. This innovative solution eliminates the need for left turns in front of oncoming traffic and has been proven to reduce crash rates significantly.

There are fewer than 100 DCDs throughout the United States and just one other in Kentucky. Not only have DCDs proven to be much safer than conventional interchanges, but they are also less costly and faster to build than other alternatives, and they move drivers through high-traffic areas more efficiently.

"The DCD is really a great alternative for both of these interchanges," said Secretary Thomas. "With the growing vehicle traffic in this region, DCDs efficiently use taxpayer resources to improve safety and travel time."

Work on the I-71/75 merging lanes will begin first and is expected to start in spring 2019 and conclude in fall 2019. Construction at the Mt. Zion Road interchange is expected to begin in spring 2019 and continue through fall 2020. Finally, work at the Richwood Road interchange is anticipated to begin in fall 2019 and conclude in fall 2022.

###