

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

Dear Secretary Chao,

This letter comes with a renewed hope and excitement for the citizens of Jefferson County, Arkansas. This area, once crowded with businesses, restaurants, shops, entertainment venues, and hotels, is working to make a comeback. Pine Bluff, the county seat and largest city, once held the distinction of being the trading center for all southwest Arkansas residents. Unfortunately, now a majority of downtown area businesses in Pine Bluff and throughout Jefferson County are closed. Jefferson County, once a bustling center of trade, has so much potential and we are determined to revive our economy.

Jefferson County is home to the U.S. Army's Pine Bluff Arsenal, built on 14,944 acres to design and manufacture defense items, serve as a technology center for infrared munitions, provide first-responder equipment, training and handle surveillance of pre-positioned equipment for Homeland Security and to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) National Toxicological Research Center, a one-million square foot research campus that is the only FDA center located outside Washington, D.C. Jefferson County roads that serve these facilities are in poor condition and were not designed or constructed to handle the industrial traffic that frequents this area. The links to these facilities are:

U.S. Army, Pine Bluff Arsenal
<http://www.militarybases.us/army/pine-bluff-arsenal/>

FDA, National Center for Toxicological Research
<http://www.fda.gov/NCTR>

Because of our close proximity to the Arkansas River, access to the rail and interstate highway, we have unique opportunities to attract industry. The Jefferson Corridor Project proposes roadways to handle the heavy traffic and industrial load from I-530 across Hwy 365 to an industrial area that is home to the largest employers in Jefferson County. The award of this grant would make it possible for our county to provide improved roadways for our largest employers, accommodate an exciting industrial development project, [GTL Americas LP](#), that is planned with an approximate \$4 billion investment, and attract other future projects to this area that has been designated as a Qualified Opportunity Zone.

Secretary Chao, we look forward to the day I-530 will be extended to join the I-69 Superhighway. For the immediate future, the proposed roadway will help us protect and grow the jobs we have in the industrial area now and expedite the construction phase of the gas-to-liquids facility, [GTL Americas LP](#), that is already fully permitted, has design engineering underway and is moving toward a construction start-up phase. The construction period will provide 2,500 jobs for three years, and then 250 full-time jobs in the first phase of a planned five-phase project. We are excited about the possibility of you finding favor with our plans. We have briefed and are grateful for the support of our congressional delegation, Senator John Boozman, Senator Tom Cotton, and Congressman Bruce Westerman on industrial development projects, including the gas-to-liquids mega-project being planned for Jefferson County.

Sincerely,

Gerald Robinson, County Judge
Jefferson County, Arkansas