Route 30 Opportunity Corridor — The Rest of the Story

Ohio's Route 30 Opportunity Corridor is the result of a Trump 1 initiative — leveraging highway grants to bring in private investment to share the cost of important projects. The attached note seems to confirm the success of that effort. In Washington, however, things are not always as they seem, and this, as the late Paul Harvey might say, is "the rest of the story."

Shortly after the 2015 election, an Ohioan named Dan Slane came to Washington and teamed up with infrastructure guru Norman Anderson to advise the new businessman President on transformational changes to infrastructure policy needed to restore the U.S. to its proper position — the nation with the world's best and most efficient infrastructure.

They recognized that there would never be enough public money to maintain the infrastructure of the past century, much less fund the needs of the 21st, and proposed using federal infrastructure funding to leverage private investment. They urged the Trump 1 Administration to use federal highway grants to attract private investment, not just pay for construction.

The White House's 2018 "Legislative Outline for Rebuilding Infrastructure in America" proposed using $200 billion in federal highway money to leverage $1.5 trillion in non-federal investment through expanded federal loan programs, private-activity bonds, and asset monetization.

Ohio's Route 30 Opportunity Corridor project was designed to advance that policy. The Ohio legislature created RTIP in 2016, and in 2019 the Trump DOT awarded Ohio's Regional Transportation Improvement Project ("RTIP") an $18 million BUILD grant to demonstrate that private capital could genuinely supplement funding for highways and related public infrastructure.

But DOT staff — from the end of the first Trump term through the Biden Administration — insisted the grant could only pay for narrowly defined "construction" of the shortest possible segment, not the planning and investor outreach the model actually requires. The local share was never raised, and the grant was never obligated. Congress had to repeatedly extend it just to keep it alive. It essentially died during the Biden Administration, and Trump 2 failed to resurrect it.

The private-sector outreach policy seems to be back but not much seems to be happening. Secretary Duffy has ordered every DOT operating administration to review its grant agreements and amend them as needed to ensure they're consistent with the Administration's priorities, including strong private co-funding. Little has happened in response to that order. The indications are that the staff that adopted the "construction only" policy in the first instance cratered the review and allowed the grant to die.

That's backwards. If DOT was serious about reviewing grants for consistency with a policy of leveraging private capital, the 2019 grant wasn't just a candidate for review — it's the original example of that policy. Letting this one die was contrary to both the President's policy and the Secretary's order implementing it. It looks like another DOGE failure. The order that stood up DOGE, and Secretary Duffy's own order, exist to catch exactly this kind of result.

Meanwhile, RTIP has soldiered on. Without the grant, RTIP, a visionary State Senator, and a group of committed supporters assembled a core group of roughly 40 technology companies, including recognized industry leaders, and amended Ohio law to secure a mile-wide right-of-way along the corridor stretching from Canton to the Pennsylvania border.

The Corridor project will eventually prove that public and private capital, together with community initiative and commitment, can jointly fund a highway and 21st-century infrastructure — grant or no grant. Unfortunately, it may also prove that we should not rely on government to be of much assistance with this sort of innovation.

RTIP's BUILD grant was meant to be the first step in demonstrating a financing model the Administration has pushed for years, and DOT staff has resisted for just as long. The Administration's effort through DOGE and the Secretary's review seems, so far, to have failed. We will continue to examine these issues and comment further in the future.

***

The U.S. Route 30 Opportunity Corridor - *How a Smarter Highway Can Help Pay for Itself and Allow Its Communities Prosper*

A community intelligence hub, an innovative energy backbone, and a data-dividend model turn an Ohio highway extension into a regional asset that pays a substantial share of highway construction and maintenance costs — and creates real community value — without new gas or property taxes.

***

Traditionally, federal highway expansions are federally funded, with the required local share raised through taxes, bond issues, and hopes that traffic counts and related development justify the expenditure. The US Route 30 Opportunity Corridor in Ohio takes a different approach.

THE BIG IDEA

A highway should be more than pavement. There's room alongside the road to run fiber-optic cable, natural gas lines, water lines, and high-voltage power — all of which can be rented or leased for revenue. Make the highway fully 5G-connected, and it can also guide self-driving trucks, bring fast internet and internet-related services to nearby towns and schools, and eventually even charge electric trucks as they drive. Every one of those services is a paid transaction, and that money helps fund local services and pays a return to RTIP, which plans and manages the corridor.

A visionary Ohio law, conceived and advanced by the late Senator Kirk Schuring, authorizes a three-county Regional Transportation Improvement Project ("RTIP") to acquire, plan for, and manage a one-mile-wide corridor of land along the highway and lease or rent it to private companies — power and gas utilities, internet providers, and data and technology firms. The private-sector revenue generated by these rents will help fund the extension and modernization of US 30 — the Lincoln Highway — from Canton to the Pennsylvania border.

Managed this way, the road can help pay for itself. The Corridor becomes the spine of a regional intelligence and energy network that Canton, Stark County, and their neighbors in Pennsylvania and West Virginia can all draw upon. At the same time, the privately funded projects in the Corridor will bring the counties' digital infrastructure into the 21st century and give local citizens and governments the digital capabilities and services needed to survive and prosper in today's and tomorrow's environment.

Because this Corridor plugs into the emerging U.S. coast-to-coast logistics network, local businesses stop being "in the middle of nowhere" and become instead "at the heart of everywhere." This kind of platform is positioned to drive the next wave of American manufacturing reshoring, as emerging technologies and national-security demands make local, corridor-adjacent production the economically rational choice. US 30 becomes not just a through route but a location advantage for the jobs of the future — not merely processing data, but building the businesses, products, and user experiences the new 5G ecosystem makes possible. The Route 30 Corridor — and the "New American Model" for financing it, capturing corridor value to fund construction while generating continuing revenue for the communities along it — is a viable and repeatable pattern, built to enhance and improve the RTIP area and to extend into Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and beyond.

THE ANCHOR: CANTON COMMUNITY INFORMATION CENTER

The near-term instrument for delivering this vision — and the first tenant in the Corridor's planned utility spine — is a Community Information Center ("CIC"), to be located in Canton and connected to a captive network of Community Information Nodes extending through Stark, Columbiana, and Carroll Counties and beyond.

This network is designed to bring the benefits of advanced AI systems to distributed locations in each of these communities. Unlike major data centers, which use massive amounts of local resources to generate data and computing power for export and use throughout the world, the CIC concept consumes minimal local resources to create value for local communities — training, education, improved community services, and more. Its mission is to improve transportation logistics and traffic flow, but just as important, to promote and facilitate data exchange, collaborative research, improved community services, and enhanced development potential — the day-to-day capabilities that determine whether communities survive and prosper in today's and tomorrow's environment.

THE CONSORTIUM BEHIND THE CIC

Three technology partners provide the stack that makes the CIC function, each with a distinct and complementary role:

Partner	Role & Contribution
Lattice Industries	Lead project manager and integrator. Manages, secures, and monetizes the corridor's collected data — the mechanism by which public agencies receive "data dividends" when private shippers and logistics operators use the corridor's analytics. Manages CIC digital services, charges a management fee, and remits "service dividends" to Canton and the Counties.
NVIDIA	Supplies the computer hardware and AI software that process sensor and video feeds from across the Corridor in real time — the inference layer that turns raw data into usable intelligence.
Oracle	Provides secure cloud storage and ledger software that tracks right-of-way lease revenue and enables data sharing across state and local jurisdictional lines — essential given the Corridor's reach into Pennsylvania and West Virginia.

CIC REVENUE GENERATION AND SHARING

The CIC will manage its digital infrastructure and related data-management and data-trading operations to create value for local communities and, importantly, to generate revenue for community use. Projections suggest that these revenues will be substantial and, combined with the improved services to be offered, will meaningfully contribute to the Counties' quality of life.

WHAT THIS DELIVERS FOR OHIO, THE COUNTIES, AND THEIR NEIGHBORS

- **Private funding for a public road:** The US-30 expansion is funded in large part by lease fees, rents, and service payments from private tech and energy tenants, service users, and data consumers — not by raising gasoline or property taxes on corridor residents.
- **21st-century digital infrastructure:** Properly managed to optimize community benefits and generate continuing revenue and related benefits for citizens and for public and private entities in Canton and the Counties.
- **Economic and freight growth:** Coordinated rail, barge, and truck connections give shippers faster, more predictable routes through the region and beyond.
- **A platform for reshoring:** Full-corridor 5G, national logistics connectivity, and a localized production advantage position Route 30 businesses to compete for the manufacturing capacity moving back to the U.S. — the corridor as a location for the next wave of American manufacturing, not simply a route through it.
- **A replicable model beyond Route 30:** The pipeline-to-local-generator energy model, the Lattice/NVIDIA/Oracle technology stack, and the HB 33 lease-revenue financing structure together form a blueprint that can be replicated on other energy and opportunity corridors, including into West Virginia and Pennsylvania.
- **Enhanced Safety and Security:** Centrally managed and coordinated linear infrastructure systems enhance safety and security.

The takeaway that matters here is not that the Corridor will host advanced technology — plenty of highway projects can claim that. It is that the technology becomes an integral part of the highway project, more than pays its own way, and promotes especially high-quality local development. Revenue from Lattice, NVIDIA, Oracle, and the energy and other partners funds the "pavement" — the basic highway itself; data and service dividends flow back to the public agencies that host the corridor; and the advanced network can promote sustainability and keep the lights on in surrounding towns. The Opportunity Corridor will be a genuine regional asset, not just a technology showcase riding a highway project.

***

Route 30 Opportunity Corridor — *The Rest of* the Rest of the Story
Wonder of wonders — as we were wrapping up the attached note on the Ohio RTIP's progress in carrying out the Trump 1 initiative to use highway funding to leverage private investment in linear infrastructure within highway rights-of-way, DOT's Build America Bureau, at long last, strongly endorsed the Corridor Concept and issued a detailed Request for Information seeking input on the mechanics of carrying out such an effort.

Having worked on this effort for nearly a decade and developed a "ready-to-turn-the-key" initial project to carry the initiative forward, the Ohio RTIP is ready not only to respond but is in a position to take immediate action to carry the President's objective forward.

Perhaps the Rest of the Story will have a happy ending after all.

2025 Law and Policy llc
2025@2025lawandpolicy.com
http://2025llc.com/

Thoughts, comments, and suggestions are always welcome at 2025@2025lawandpolicy.com