

OPINION

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LETTERS

Establish TIF to fund Cleveland Towpath Trail

Within the pages of the new transportation bill, you will find support for Northeast Ohio's most successful regional project: the Ohio & Erie Canalway. The Canalway's Towpath Trail will receive more than \$11 million for trail developments in four counties, including \$6.44 million for Cleveland's Towpath and \$2 million for an Independence connector trail.

The Cleveland Towpath Trail Partnership Committee is working to complete the Towpath Trail in Cleveland and recognizes and credits our Northeast Ohio congressional delegation — Reps. Dennis Kucinich, Stephanie

Tubbs Jones, Steve LaTourette and Ralph Regula, and Sens. George Voinovich and Mike DeWine — for their diligence.

Completing Cleveland's Towpath Trail is expected to cost \$25 million. The city's biggest challenge is finding a local match for future eligible transportation funds. Currently, Cleveland is exploring a tax increment financing (TIF) district based upon Steelyard Commons. A TIF could generate \$10 million in local matching funds, offering the chance for Cleveland to leverage \$40 million and finish the Towpath Trail and Canal Basin Park.

Cleveland stands at the thresh-

old of a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. The Steelyard Commons TIF could generate local government funding to finish two projects, bringing new economic investment into the Cuyahoga River Valley, creating a unique trail network, introducing novel tourist-related experiences and repositioning Cleveland to compete with other cities for new knowledge businesses and their I-can-live-anywhere work forces.

Let's build the Towpath Trail and Canal Basin Park.

TIM DONOVAN

Donovan is the director of Ohio Canal Corridor.