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Louisiana Economic Development  
100 North Street, 7th Floor  
Baton Rouge, LA 70802-5264

To whom it may concern:

On behalf of Grow NELA, I am pleased to offer our full support for the Port of Columbia's submission to the Louisiana Economic Development FastSites Program. The Port of Columbia is a critical economic asset for Northeast Louisiana, and its leadership has demonstrated a strong commitment to site preparedness, regional collaboration, and long-term growth.

Grow NELA recognizes the strategic importance of the Port of Columbia's proposed industrial rail spur, which represents the final funding element needed to activate more than \$6 million in previously awarded state and federal infrastructure dollars. The Port has already secured \$5 million through LaDOTD's Port Priority Program and \$1 million from the Delta Regional Authority—both dedicated to rail construction. The FastSites request for \$2,000,000 will close the remaining gap and allow this critical project to proceed without delay. Rail-served sites are increasingly essential for attracting new business across Northeast Louisiana, and the completion of this spur will directly strengthen the region's competitiveness for new industrial investment.

With direct access to multimodal transportation, available land, and community-backed leadership, the Port of Columbia is exceptionally well positioned to meet the readiness standards of this program. Completion of this rail will also support existing tenants and strengthen the Port's ability to attract industries requiring certified, rail-served sites.

We have worked closely with the Port of Columbia and have seen firsthand their dedication to advancing economic development opportunities across the region. Their proactive approach—focused on collaboration, planning, and long-term competitiveness—aligns directly with the goals of the FastSites Program.

We respectfully encourage your favorable consideration of this application and look forward to continued partnership in supporting high-impact, development-ready sites throughout our region.

Thank you for your commitment to strengthening Louisiana's economic foundation.

Sincerely,

Rob Cleveland  
President & CEO, Grow NELA  
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