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Recommendation 26-01: Budget and Funding Priorities to Support Coordinated Cleanup, Reindustrialization, and Regional Planning in Response to Emerging Large-Scale Energy and Data Infrastructure Development

BACKGROUND:

The Portsmouth Site Specific Advisory Board (PORTS SSAB) continues to provide advice and recommendations to the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) Office of Environmental Management (EM) regarding community priorities relevant to Jackson, Pike, Ross and Scioto counties as site budgets are developed. As outlined in Recommendation 24-01, the Portsmouth Site is in a historically economically challenged region of Southeastern Ohio where workforce continuity, infrastructure readiness, and long-term economic diversification remain critical.

The Board is grateful to DOE and the current Administration for their leadership in helping to position the Portsmouth Site for large scale reindustrialization and for supporting the conditions that have enabled transformative private-sector interest in the region.

While planning and preparation for reindustrialization have been underway for more than a decade, no economic development organization or local government could have anticipated the sheer magnitude of the currently proposed investment associated with a large-scale data center campus and supporting energy infrastructure at the Portsmouth Site. This development, described by some as potentially one of the largest projects of its kind in the world, represents a generational opportunity for Southern Ohio.

At the same time, the scale and pace of this potential investment introduce significant challenges that require immediate attention and coordinated action.

The PORTS SSAB reaffirms the priorities outlined in Recommendation 24-01 and offers the following updated and expanded recommendations for DOE consideration in future budgeting and funding decisions.

The Board continues to support the following long-standing priorities concerning the environmental remediation program and future use of the DOE site:

- Continue to investigate a path forward for metals recycling, including building upon successful nickel recovery and segmentation activities.
- Maintain and update infrastructure to support future reindustrialization.
- Transfer or lease property and establish utility use agreements to support development including the Southern Ohio Diversification Initiative (SODI).
- Prepare for modification of the DOE baseline to align cleanup activities with the PORTS Site Strategic Plan and redevelopment opportunities.
- Continue recycling efforts through the DOE-SODI Asset Transition Agreement.
- Support workforce development and training programs for D&D, energy, environmental technology, and future site uses.

The Board also reiterates its support for DOE's continued involvement in growing the region by utilizing its resources to help plan for future growth, continuing to promote collaborative work between federal, state and local parties; and facilitating preparation for future workforce and site development needs both on and off site:

- Accelerated funding approaches for the Portsmouth Site.
- Inflation-adjusted funding to maintain stable project execution.
- Continued investment through Community Commitment Plans.
- Coordination with state agencies, economic development entities, and labor organizations.
- Recognition of the four-county regional economic development collaboration.
- Expedited property transfer or lease to sustain development momentum.

Recommendation: In response to the scale of future development planned for the Portsmouth Site and the need to position the region as a partner in the developments including the acceleration of cleanup to meet the needs of the private investors looking to reindustrialize the site, the PORTS SSAB recommends:

1. Allocate Dedicated Funding for Immediate, Fast-Moving Regional Planning

Where applicable, DOE should provide funding to enable immediate and coordinated regional planning efforts across Scioto, Pike, Ross, and Jackson counties; ensure planning efforts move at a pace consistent with private-sector development timelines; and utilize DOE's long-standing relationship with Ohio University and other regional institutions to help lead and support these planning efforts.

2. Support Infrastructure Expansion Beyond the Site Boundary

Board members recognize that while on-site infrastructure may be addressed by DOE and private developers, off-site infrastructure needs present significant challenges. DOE should support planning and funding strategies to improve roadways and transportation corridors to accommodate an estimated 30,000+ construction workers. DOE

has shown the ability to coordinate with federal and state agencies to access infrastructure funding and grants which would help expedite this project.

3. Prepare Communities for Rapid Population and Workforce Growth

DOE and its contractors should support regional strategies to ensure adequate community anchor institutions are available to support construction and employment needs for the large-scale projects slated for the Portsmouth Site. A regional plan is necessary to support adequate available housing, healthcare capacity, educational resources and school system readiness, law enforcement and public safety services, and food access and commercial services. It's imperative that all stakeholders work together to ensure communities are appropriately "right-sized" to manage this influx while maintaining quality of life for existing residents.

4. Enable Coordinated Regional Economic Planning

As new industries enter the region, it's critical that DOE, along with its regional partners, promote high-level, collaborative planning across jurisdictions to ensure the region shares in the success of the project. Such coordination includes alignment between DOE, state agencies, local governments, and economic development organizations and supports access to federal and state grant funding to implement regional strategies.

5. Expand Workforce Development for Both Construction and Long-Term Operations

DOE should be an active participant in preparing local high school students, displaced workers, and young adults to take advantage of near-term construction employment opportunities simultaneously developing training pipelines for long-term operational roles associated with data center and energy facility operations, and coordinating workforce initiatives with unions, educational institutions, and state workforce programs to maximize local participation.

6. Protect Community and Environmental Outcomes

As the Department has done throughout the last several decades, DOE should continue to ensure continued coordination between site cleanup activities and new industrial development. With expanded environmental monitoring and public transparency as a cornerstone, DOE should evaluate and mitigate cumulative impacts to protect the health and well-being of residents in Scioto, Pike, Ross, and Jackson counties.