

May 11, 2020

The Honorable Elaine L. Chao, Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Subject: Letter of Support for State Route 86 / Avenue 50 Interchange Project
City of Coachella, Riverside County, CA
Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) Grant Application

Dear Ms. Chao:

As President and Chief Executive Officer of the Greater Coachella Valley Chamber of Commerce, I am pleased to provide this letter of support for the City of Coachella's State Route 86 / Avenue 50 Interchange Project under the Department of Transportation's FY 2020 National Infrastructure Investments BUILD grant program application. This grant will fund critical highway and bridge infrastructure, which will significantly improve quality of life with safer, more reliable transportation access, and spur economic growth and investment in the underserved community of Coachella, California.

The Greater Coachella Valley Chamber of Commerce is a 501 C (6) organization representing the local business community in Eastern Riverside County. We have almost 1,400 active members we serve through economic development, advocacy and community service efforts.

Currently, the city of Coachella has an infrastructure deficit which inhibits economic growth, the flow of traffic, and housing development. If funded, this project will promote regional connectivity to facilitate economic growth and competitiveness for commuters and freight traffic where it is needed the most, thereby relieving congestion, enhancing safety, security, and supporting economic development in the Coachella Valley. The notable project benefits are as follows:

- Improves safety by eliminating conflicts between mainline and cross street traffic;
- Delivers a reliable all-weather bridge crossing addressing public health and safety by reducing emergency response time;
- Improves infrastructure condition, hence, improves traffic operations;
- Reduces mainline delays by increasing capacity at the interchange;
- Provides a new access point to promote regional connectivity in rural areas to facilitate economic growth and housing development;
- Provides safer and reliable connectivity to Tribal lands;
- Installs broadband conduit to help rural citizens access opportunities;
- Enhances local and regional transportation linkages with CV Link, Union Pacific Railroad, Amtrak, and Sunline Transit Agency;
- Reduces Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) + Vehicle Hours Traveled (VHT);
- Ensures consistency with Southern California Association of Governments Regional Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP) and the Federal Transportation Improvement Program (FTIP) and Coachella Valley Association of Governments' Transportation Project Prioritization Study;
- In addition, the project footprint is also within a community that is disproportionately burdened by multiple sources of pollution; is disadvantaged and low-income. The project is in Qualified Opportunity Zone Tract Numbers 060065045706 and 06065045609.

Another crucial supporting fact is that this new SR-86/Ave 50 Interchange will serve as a critically needed alternative route to relieve traffic circulation from the adjacent interchange located approximately 1.9 miles north at SR-86 and Dillon Road. The existing Dillon Road Bridge's latest bridge inspection report shows a sufficiency rating of only 16.6. In addition, a score of 3 for the National Bridge Inventory (NBI) condition ratings for Item 60 (Substructure) classifies this bridge as Structurally Deficient per 23 CFR 490.411 and 490.413. It is further compounded by a low score of 3 for NBI Item 113 (Scour Critical Bridge), which formally lists this as a Scour Critical Bridge. A load rating analysis determined that the bridge no longer has the capacity to carry standard truck loads. For this reason, as a temporary control mitigation measure, it requires posting of weight restriction traffic signs to forewarn truckers to use alternate routes. Due to poor bridge condition, there is high probability the Dillon Road Bridge may need to be closed to traffic in the near future. Presently, the preliminary engineering and environmental documentation for a bridge replacement bridge are ongoing, thus, its delivery schedule is lagging behind this SR-86/Avenue 50 intersection project. It would be catastrophic to the community and region if the Dillon Road Bridge closure happened without the completion of this SR-86 and Avenue 50 project. Thereby, this grant is essential to prevent any potential devastations, which may cause further setbacks to this disproportionately pollution burdened, disadvantaged, low-income area.

We urge the USDOT to award \$25 million of the discretionary BUILD funds for construction of an interchange at SR-86 and Avenue 50, which is one of the principal routes used by rural agricultural producers across the Coachella Valley region; it also serves as a connection to distribution channels that cross the U.S./Mexico border, and is part of the NAFTA Farm-to-Market Highway. Should you have any questions regarding my endorsement, please do not hesitate to contact me at (760) 347-0676. Thank you.

Sincerely,



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