

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 New Interchange Project
City of Coachella, Riverside County, CA
FY 2020 Nationally Significant Federal Lands and Tribal Projects Program

Dear Ms. Chao:

As the President and CEO 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 Nationally Significant Federal Lands and Tribal Projects 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 City of Coachella, in cooperation with the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) District 8 and the Coachella Valley Association of Governments (CVAG), proposes the construction of a new interchange at State Route 86 (SR-86) and Avenue 50, approximately 1.1 miles north of the existing Avenue 52 intersection and 1.95 miles south of the existing Dillon Road interchange. The proposed project would convert a portion of SR-86 from existing expressway to freeway with a new overcrossing structure and access ramps, which would accommodate traffic for existing and planned development in the area. The project would also improve safety and traffic operations by enhancing the level of service (LOS) on the adjacent SR-86/Dillon Road interchange and SR-86/Avenue 52 intersection.

The proposed improvements include realignment and widening of Avenue 50 from the existing two-lane roadway to a six-lane major arterial, and realignment of Tyler Street on both the east and west side of SR-86. The project would also improve public safety and mobility by constructing another new bridge spanning over Coachella Valley Stormwater Channel (CVSC), replacing the existing low water crossing, and eliminating flood-related hazards during inclement weather events.

It is planned for this project to be constructed in two separate phases. The first phase will focus on construction of the bridge over CVSC and will include realignments of Avenue 50 and Tyler Street on the west side of SR-86. The second phase will focus on construction of the new SR86/Avenue 50 interchange and will also include realignment of Tyler Street on the east side of SR-86. Proposed funding for the project is anticipated to be from a combination of City, CVAG, and Federal NSFLTP and Demonstration ("DEMO") funds. The project is included in the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG)'s 2016-2040 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (RTP/SCS) [Project ID RIV061159/ RIV110825], as well as the 2017 Federal Transportation Improvement Program (FTIP) [Project ID RIV061159/RIV110825].

[continued]

We urge the USDOT to award \$52 million 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.

Agriculture is a major industry in the Coachella Valley, with about 70,000 acres producing \$575,000,000 million dollars of crops and agricultural products per year. Top crops include dates, citrus, table grapes, lettuce, carrots, bell peppers, broccoli and melons. The city of Coachella sprawls in the heart of the Coachella Valley and is a shipping point for its produce. SR-86 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,



Joshua R. Bonner
President and Chief Executive Officer