

Southwest Oklahoma Impact Coalition



October 2, 2017

The Honorable Elaine L. Chao
U.S. Secretary of Transportation
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave SE
Washington, D.C. 20590

RE: Infrastructure for Rebuilding America (INFRA) funding for the US-81 bypass in Grady County

Honorable Secretary Chao:

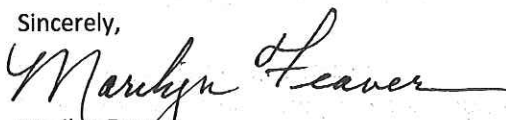
The Southwest Oklahoma Impact Coalition (SOIC), a 20-county regional economic development entity, would like to go on record as supporting the Oklahoma Department of Transportation's (ODOT) application for an *Infrastructure for Rebuilding America* (INFRA) grant to assist with the US-81 bypass located in Chickasha, Grady County, Oklahoma. This bypass will greatly improve US-81 and is a long and much anticipated project that will provide for enhanced motorist safety, traffic and freight movement and certainly meets the strategic goals of both ODOT and the entire region.

SOIC's partners involve both the public and private sector including five institutions of higher education, career technology centers, local and regional economic development entities, and private business and industry. When creating our current business plan, nearly 600 hundred businesses in Southwest Oklahoma were surveyed in order to identify growth challenges and opportunities. The top two priorities identified by these business owners were workforce and transportation infrastructure, thus SOIC's current focus on creating a skilled workforce through Career Pathways initiatives and regional transportation planning to support Oklahoma's economy.

SOIC not only supports regional transportation planning but is actively engaged in creating and promoting transportation priorities that will encourage future growth, reduce congestion and advance local, regional and state economic development efforts. In this regard, **this bypass will serve as a major artery supporting the movement of freight and traffic in a much safer and expedient manner.** Local citizens find maneuvering the main corridor of 4th Street (Hwy 81) onerous due to the *huge* increase of daily traffic being experienced primarily due to the movement of freight related to the energy industry.

We strongly support the proposed US-81 bypass project. We also urge your support of full funding for all of the reasons stated above. Thank you for your consideration of this critically important infrastructure improvement.

Sincerely,



Marilyn Feaver
Executive Director