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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

May 19, 2022

PLEASE REPLY TO:

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100 EAST 13TH STREET, SUITE 213
ADA, OK 74820
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The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
Secretary of Transportation
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave., SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

I strongly support the Oklahoma Department of Transportation's (ODOT's) Rural Surface Transportation Grant (RURAL) application under the Multimodal Project Discretionary Grant Opportunity for the Grady County US-81 Realignment project.

The US-81 project will greatly reduce congestion through downtown Chickasha by constructing a new controlled-access highway alignment to help move heavy freight, agriculture, and energy sector traffic. The project includes the construction of more than eight miles of realigned US-81 between US-62 and SH-19, six new interchanges at major roads, and two grade-separated rail crossings. These upgrades will facilitate safe and efficient movement of freight traffic, supporting regional and local economic activity while improving local access, pedestrian safety, air quality, commerce, and general mobility in Chickasha.

This rural region's economy is driven by the agriculture and energy industries but is currently disadvantaged by the lack of an efficient north-south freight corridor. The current US-81 route through Chickasha has 14 signalized intersections and two 90 degree turns, which slows freight traffic and causes congestion. This is especially problematic for oversized loads, such as trucks moving wind turbine blades, trying to navigate the busy downtown area. If this project is selected for an MPDG award, the funding will improve travel for more than 16,000 vehicles per day on US-81, of which 17 percent is commercial truck traffic.

US-81 anchors the rural hubs of Enid, Kingfisher, El Reno, Chickasha, and Duncan and serves as a freight route to five major military facilities, as well as facilitating regional and interstate commerce north to Wichita, Kansas and south to Fort Worth, Texas and beyond. This project is expected to have significant positive impacts in southwestern Oklahoma by providing for safer and more efficient travel and facilitating increased economic activity.

I thank you in advance for your serious consideration of ODOT's application for this RURAL grant. Please contact Sofia Deiro at sofia.deiro@mail.house.gov if you need any further assistance as you consider this important project.

Sincerely,

Tom Cole
Member of Congress