

February 14, 2023

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
U.S. Secretary of Transportation
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave SE
Washington, D.C. 20590

Re: Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) Grant opportunity for
Bridging the Gap: New Multimodal Connections on I-35 over the Oklahoma River

Dear Secretary:

As an economic development organization with just under 4,000 members located in the 20th most populous U.S. city, the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber is strongly supportive of the Oklahoma Department of Transportation's (ODOT) RAISE grant application. The I-35 bridges are perilously close to becoming structurally deficient at future bridge inspection. The Chamber supports replacing the current bridges with an iconic structure that will showcase Oklahoma City and our significant tourism and recreation opportunities at the confluence of two major interstate highways (I-35/I-40).

Since these bridges were built over three decades ago, the Oklahoma River – which was then indistinguishable from a small, often dry creek – has been dammed and now plays host to elite national rowing races and an architecturally-inspired “Boathouse Row”. Today, this area is home to U.S. Olympic Team Training and a spectacular River Sport Complex. Currently, the bridges, with pylons anchored into the water, are a barrier to competitive opportunities that we believe should be addressed through a new structure. Furthermore, the Oklahoma River runs along the edge of downtown Oklahoma City for 7 miles and features 13 miles of paved trails that have transformed outdoor recreation in our community. The new I-35 bridge would accommodate bicycles and pedestrians on the bridge separated from traffic by a concrete barrier and provide access to 10 interconnected trails that cover over 80 miles.

Crucially, this project includes connections to the prestigious First Americans Museum, showcasing Oklahoma's incredibly rich Native American history, the planned \$300 million OKANA resort being developed by the Chickasaw Nation, and the largely Hispanic Capitol Hill District, a Historically Disadvantaged Community located on the south side of the Oklahoma River. We believe the location of these exciting cultural offerings in such a dense area makes our project among the most unique in the nation.

In conclusion, the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber strongly supports ODOT's efforts to secure a RAISE grant to help realize the **New Multimodal Connections on I-35 over the Oklahoma River project** and strongly urge your support for full funding of this transformative effort.

Sincerely,

Christy Gillenwater
President/CEO