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February 25, 2020

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

Dear Secretary Chao:

I write to express my support for the Oklahoma Department of Transportation's (ODOT) Infrastructure for Rebuilding America (INFRA) grant application for the US-81 realignment project in Grady County.

This project would advance construction of a new highway alignment to move heavy freight and oilfield traffic on US-81 out of the congested downtown area and onto a four-lane, controlled-access highway on the west side of Chickasha. The project includes construction of 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, commerce and general mobility.

This rural region's economy is driven by wind energy, oil and gas, military operations, and agricultural industries. However, it 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, especially oversized loads, trying to navigate the busy downtown area. The US-81 realignment project would improve travel for more than 16,000 vehicles per day, 17 percent of which 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 regional and interstate commerce with Wichita, Kansas; Fort Worth, Texas and beyond. The US-81 realignment project would have significant positive impacts in southwestern Oklahoma by providing safer and more efficient travel and increasing economic development activity.

I support ODOT's application for the US-81 alignment project, and urge your consideration of this important project to rural Oklahoma.

Sincerely,



James M. Inhofe
United States Senator