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Elaine L. Chao, Secretary
Office of Infrastructure Finance and Innovation
Office of the Secretary of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Chao:

In partnership with the Oklahoma Department of Transportation (ODOT), Grand River Dam Authority (GRDA) is applying for a Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) Discretionary Grant to widen State Highway 28 over Pensacola Dam and its Auxiliary Spillways. This funding will be utilized alongside both private and State funds in order to rehabilitate and widen the Pensacola Dam Bridge along with the East and the West spillway bridges. This letter of support conveys my endorsement of the need to increase the safety of pedestrians and vehicles and extend the life of these three bridges.

The Pensacola Dam is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, as it is the only multi-arch dam in the State of Oklahoma and the longest multi-arch dam in the entire United States. The dam, powerhouse, substation, two spillways and intake structure are all components of what is deemed the Pensacola Dam Historic District. Unfortunately, due to the fact that the Pensacola Dam Bridge was constructed almost eighty years ago, in the late 1930's, it is currently classified by ODOT as "at-risk" of becoming structurally deficient and is also the narrowest two-lane bridge in the State of Oklahoma. I support this project to significantly rehabilitate and widen the Pensacola Dam bridges to allow the bridges to continue serving the needs of ODOT, GRDA, as well as the nearby communities of Tia Juana, Disney and Langley.

The local communities of Tia Juana, Disney and Langley have been actively engaged in the application for this funding as well as additional stakeholders including, but certainly not limited to, county governments, emergency responders, and other pertinent parties. This project is vital to the region of northeastern Oklahoma as the three bridges are utilized daily by fire trucks, ambulances, camping trailers, boats, RVs, and semi-trucks. The SH 28 bridges are also used to connect tourists to the various state parks, resorts, and marinas that are located around Grand Lake o' the Cherokees (Grand Lake). It is also important to note that during the summer months, the population surrounding Grand Lake almost triples in size. This increase in population highlights the importance of these structures. Not only is this project central to maintaining the existence of tourism around this area, but it is important that SH 28 be functional in its ability to move goods and services between the rural and small communities located in the project area.

ODOT's safety data shows that the overall collision rates along the project area are 34% above the statewide average rates between 2014 and 2016. This data is additional evidence that these three bridges are structurally inadequate and functionally obsolete due to excessive loads, their narrow width, and their age. Should SH 28 not be able to support the size requirements of the average, present day vehicle due to the existing lane width not meeting current industry standards, the local communities around this area will be at risk.

Both GRDA and ODOT have allocated partial funding to enhance and repair the structures, and they jointly share responsibility for the aforementioned three bridges. I firmly believe that their application to widen SH 28 is a promising candidate for the BUILD Discretionary Grant program, and I support their request for funding. This project is extremely significant and essential for both the public safety and prosperity of northeastern Oklahoma. Thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts on this important project.

Sincerely,

Senator Wayne Shaw
State Senate District 3

Senate District 3

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