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June 26, 2018

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

Dear Secretary Chao:

This letter expresses my support for the joint Oklahoma Department of Transportation (ODOT)—Grand River Dam Authority (GRDA) application for a Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) Discretionary Grant to widen State Highway 28 (SH 28). ODOT and GRDA share responsibility for the three bridges along SH 28, including the Pensacola Dam Bridge, and have set aside partial funding to enhance and repair the structures. This project is extremely important to the region of northeastern Oklahoma as it will increase the safety of all highway users as well as extend the life of these three bridges.

The Pensacola Dam bridges were constructed in 1940. Significant rehabilitation and widening is needed so they can continue serving the needs of the Grand River Dam Authority (owner) and ODOT, as well as the communities of Langley, Disney and Tia Juana. The Pensacola Dam Bridge is the narrowest two-lane bridge in Oklahoma and is classified by ODOT as “at-risk” of becoming structurally deficient. The dam itself is listed on the National Register of Historic Places due to it being the longest multi-arch dam in the United States and the only multi-arch dam in Oklahoma. The Pensacola Dam Historic District consists of the dam, powerhouse, substation, two spillways and intake structure.

The three SH 28 bridges are traveled daily by a combination of semi-trucks, recreation vehicles, boats, camping trailers, ambulances, fire trucks and other wide loads. It is also an important tourism connector route, as it is the primary thoroughfare to multiple resorts, marinas, and state parks around Grand Lake. During the summer months, the population surrounding Grand Lake nearly triples, placing additional demand on these structures. The three bridges are functionally obsolete and structurally inadequate due to age, narrow width and excessive loads. ODOT safety data shows that the overall collision rates along the project area are 33% above the statewide average rates between 2013 and 2015.

GRDA and ODOT share responsibility for the three bridges and have both allocated partial funding to repair and enhance the structure. They agree the project is critical to the future

of northeastern Oklahoma in terms of movement of goods and services as well as regional tourism. Further, rural and small communities are at risk if SH 28 is unable to accommodate the size requirements of the average, present day vehicle due to the existing lane width not meeting current industry standards. Stakeholder engagement is ongoing and has included the local communities, emergency responders, county government and other interested parties.

I believe that GRDA's SH 28 Bridge Widening project is a strong candidate for the BUILD Discretionary Grant program, as it is a significant project for the public safety, economic development and prosperity of northeast Oklahoma. Thank you for the opportunity to support this important project.

Please contact Jennie Wright in my office at 202-224-4721 or jennie_wright@inhofe.senate.gov if you need any further assistance as you consider this important project. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



James M. Inhofe
United States Senator