

August 17, 2022

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

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

As a regionally influential economic development organization and chamber of commerce, the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber is a long-standing supporter of infrastructure investment as a critical driver of economic growth. We believe the quality of our transportation system bears a direct correlation to making our region more attractive for business expansion and retention. Therefore, we are pleased to lend our emphatic support to the Oklahoma Department of Transportation's (ODOT) application for a Bridge Investment Program (BIP) grant to assist with the nationally significant Interstate 40 (over Portland) and Interstate 44 (K Interchange Project) in Oklahoma City. This project is adjacent to major economic development sites such as the State Fairgrounds of Oklahoma, known as "the Horse Capital of the World", which has an estimated economic impact of \$143.4 million from its horse shows and attracts nearly one million visitors annually for the Oklahoma State Fair.

Interstate 40 is a large, nationally significant urban interstate corridor that serves as the primary east-west route through the Downtown/Central Business District of Oklahoma City. In recent years, this key corridor has undergone numerous substantial upgrades to keep pace with the continuous revitalization and expansion of Downtown Oklahoma City. Most significantly, in 2015 the major realignment of I-40 and the I-40 Crosstown Expressway Project was fully completed and created a substantial area of land for downtown re-development, including a new \$288 million Oklahoma City Convention Center and the 80-acre urban Scissortail Park. The new interstate was tied back to downtown via the Oklahoma City Boulevard. After completion of this key project, ODOT identified a goal of widening the existing I-40 corridor and improving the bridge structures within the interchange, with the primary focus on the bridges over I-40 and Portland Avenue and improving safety and traffic flow.

Currently, the I-40 bridges over I-44 carry two lanes, which leads to safety and congestion issues in a key artery within Oklahoma City for residents and visitors. Proposed lane improvements to better align traffic west of the bridges over Portland Boulevard would allow for driver continuity by providing lane balance through the interchange. Significantly, the project seeks to replace or rehabilitate multiple bridge structures, constructed in the 1960's. Of the ten bridges within this specific interchange, **eight** are at risk of being rated structurally deficient as they sit at 5 on the 2022 National Bridge Inventory (NBI) rating. Six of the eight endangered bridges in this area would be addressed within the proposed projects, and greatly assisted by the award of a BIP grant. Taken as a complete system, this would allow the I-44/I-40 interchange to integrate traffic more smoothly and would relieve what has become a transportation bottleneck in the nation's 20th largest city. In conclusion, the I-44/I-40 interchange is a key artery on the national and Oklahoma City metro transportation systems. The Chamber strongly believes the award of BIP grant funding would allow this major interchange to better align with major transportation improvements and ongoing economic development activities.

Respectfully,



Roy Williams
President and CEO