



Tuesday, August 23, 2022

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

RE: Bridge Investment Program (BIP) for the I-40 over Portland and I-44 K Interchange Project in Oklahoma County

Honorable Secretary Buttigieg:

On behalf of the Oklahoma State Fair, Inc. and the OKC Fairgrounds, I am writing to voice our organization's strong support of the Oklahoma Department of Transportation's (ODOT) application for the Bridge Investment Program (BIP) Grant to assist with the I-40 over Portland and I-44 K Interchange Project in Oklahoma County.

Interstate 40 (I-40) is a large urban interstate corridor that serves as the primary east-west route through the downtown and central business district of Oklahoma City. The I-40 corridor has undergone numerous large projects to keep up with the revitalization and expansion within the Oklahoma City business core. There are several key areas adjacent to the interchange including the Oklahoma River and River Trail system and the Oklahoma City Fairgrounds. The business district along Portland features multiple regional and national businesses including Dell Computers and Mathis Brothers Furniture. In the late 2000's, the realignment of I-40 under the I-40 Crosstown Expressway project was undertaken to upgrade the facility.

After the completion of the I-40 Crosstown Expressway in 2015, ODOT expressed the goal of widening the existing I-40 corridor and improving the bridge structures within the interchange extents, with the primary focus on the bridges over I-44 and Portland Avenue. The proposed improvements include widening of the roadway and bridges to a minimum of three basic lanes along I-40. The newly constructed I-40 Crosstown Expressway carries 5 basic lanes of traffic and proposed improvements west of the bridges over Portland Boulevard are being designed to carry four basic lanes. The addition of the through lanes on the bridges would allow for driver continuity by providing lane balance through the interchange. Currently, the I-40 bridges over I-44 carry two lanes, which leads to congestion and safety issues.

The project also seeks to replace or rehabilitate multiple bridge structures within the interchange. The goals of the bridge improvements are to provide additional lane capacity, improve operations within the interchange, and ensure the structures meets current design standards. There are ten bridges within the I-40 & I-44 K Interchange and I-40 Portland project extents. Within the project, eight of those bridges are or in danger of becoming rated structurally deficient with a 2022 National Bridge Inventory (NBI) rating of at least five in one of the primary categories.

Oklahoma State Fair, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit corporation that serves the people of Oklahoma. We are dedicated to continuing the organization's heritage of education, entertainment and economic development through the operation of the OKC Fairgrounds and the annual Oklahoma State Fair.

If a rating of four is received, the bridge is considered structurally deficient. The bridges were constructed in the late 1960's and are showing signs of reaching the end of their design life.

Six of the eight endangered bridges would be addressed within the proposed projects. The four mainline bridges over I-44 and Portland Ave. are proposed to be improved with additional lane capacity, proper width shoulders, and meet AASHTO vertical clearance requirements. The I-40 EB and WB bridges over I-44 also contain fracture critical members. Two ramp bridges would undergo rehabilitation and pier relocation to enable widening of roadways and improve their superstructure and decks. The final two structures being improved within the project are large multi-cell reinforced concrete box structures that will undergo improvements to the end sections.

I-40 corridor through the project area carries an average annual daily traffic (AADT) of 127,660 east of the I-40/I-44 interchange; 59,390 on the bridges over I-44; and 124,660 west of the I-40/I-44 interchange. Traffic volumes are projected to increase to a 2051 AADT of 177,056 (28% increase) east of the I-40/I-44 interchange; 87,112 (32% increase) over the I-44; and 173,104 (28% increase) west of the I-40/I-44 interchange. The average annual daily truck traffic on I-40 in the project area is 16 percent, on average there are nearly 20,000 trucks per day crossing the I-40 eastbound and westbound bridges over I-44. Based on the 2051 traffic projections, truck traffic could approach 28,000 per day in the project area.

In summary, the I-40 over I-44 "K" Interchange projects' primary goal is to construct improved bridges and roadways on basic present alignment to promote safer operation and replace facilities that are close to the end of their design life. The bridges included in the project are rated structurally deficient or have the potential to be in the near future. The proposed I-40 bridge replacements would help to provide lane balance across the interchange, add capacity, include proper shoulder widths to allow vehicles to pull-off the shoulder, and meet AASHTO vertical clearance requirements. The improvements should enhance operation and reduce the high collision rates that are common within the project extents.

The Oklahoma State Fair, Inc. and the OKC Fairgrounds strongly supports I-40 over Portland and I-44 K Interchange Project in Oklahoma County for its vital contribution to the region, state and nation. We strongly urge your support of full funding for the project. Thank you for your consideration and please feel free to call on us should you have questions or if you require additional information.

Sincerely,



Kirk Slaughter
President & CEO