



July 22, 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-35 Bridge Replacement Project in
Oklahoma County

Honorable Secretary Buttigieg:

The Association of Central Oklahoma Governments (ACOG) would like to voice our organization's strong support of the Oklahoma Department of Transportation (ODOT) application for the Bridge Investment Program (BIP) Grant to assist with the I-35 Bridge Replacement Project. This project is a marquis project in the downtown core of Oklahoma City. The older I-35 bridges are being regularly inspected, but are perilously close to becoming structurally deficient at their next inspection. These bridges are a key link in the north-south transportation network for North America, so swift action is requested.

Perhaps the most unique aspect of this I-35 bridge replacement project is the tremendous community impacts that the bridge replacement will offer the Oklahoma City region. Since these bridges were built over three decades ago, the Oklahoma River has been dammed and is now host to elite national rowing races. In addition, near the edge of the river is the new River Sports Complex which is home to US Olympic Team training.

The current I-35 bridges have 10 piers in the Oklahoma River which limit the boat racing from being classified at the highest level. A primary goal of major stakeholders in this project is that the new I-35 bridges have no piers in the water and span the entire Oklahoma River. This brings additional cost to the project, but it is paramount that this is the design to support the tremendous investment the community stakeholders have made in and along the Oklahoma River.

Based on the Interchange Capacity Study and Long Span Bridge Study, there is local momentum and support to construct a long span bridge over the Oklahoma River. The current I-35 NB and SB bridges are 803 feet in length, with eight approximate 100' spans. The new long span bridges would be 820 feet in length, with one 520-foot signature span and three 100-foot conventional back spans. The new long span bridges would provide six 12-foot lanes in each direction, 12 foot inside shoulders, and outside shoulders varying between 12'-0" and 18'-10". Currently, the I-35 bridges have four 10-foot lanes in each direction, but the travel lanes and shoulder widths are inadequate and both bridges are functionally obsolete.

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Along the edge of downtown Oklahoma City runs the scenic Oklahoma River, a 7-mile-long waterway and 13 miles of paved trails that has reinvented outdoor recreation in the capital city. The new I-35 bridges would accommodate bicycle and pedestrians on the bridges and separated from traffic with a concrete barrier. Access to the paved trails on both the sides of the river will be provided off the new I-35 bridges. This will improve access to the recreational trails and provide direct bicycle and pedestrian access in and out of downtown Oklahoma City. The new bridges and multimodal connections would also provide unique and needed access to the largely Hispanic Capitol Hill district and Historically Disadvantaged Community located on the south side of the Oklahoma River.

ACOG strongly supports the I-35 Bridge Replacement Project in Oklahoma City 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,



Mark W. Sweeney, AICP
Executive Director

Chair
Josh Moore
Edmond Councilmember

Vice-Chair
Brian Grider
Mustang Mayor

Secretary/Treasurer
Glenn Berglan
Goldsby Mayor

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