

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

November 1, 2017

The Honorable Elaine Chao
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Secretary Chao:

We write to convey our support for the City of Bakersfield's (City) *Centennial Corridor State Route 58/99 Freight Improvement Project* application for \$60 million in funding from the Department of Transportation's Infrastructure for Rebuilding America (INFRA) grant program. Grant funding would enable the City to construct an extension of SR-58 through Bakersfield from SR-99 to the Westside Parkway, which would provide a more direct connection to I-5. This would greatly alleviate traffic congestion in our community and significantly improve interregional mobility and air quality.


Much of the \$400 billion worth of goods flowing through the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach last year either began or completed their journey on California's highways. The I-5 and SR-99 provide two of the three main north-south route options in our state and are critical components of California's heavily-traveled surface transportation network. For travelers moving east-west, there are relatively fewer options due to the geography of the Sierra Nevada Mountain range. The SR-58 provides all-weather access across the Sierra Nevada Mountains and is a highly-utilized route for freight transportation connecting California's southern coast to the American Southwest. To emphasize the importance of this route, the California Department of Transportation is leading a \$175 million project to widen the last remaining two-lane segment of SR-58 between Barstow and Bakersfield to four lanes. At present, east-west regional mobility is significantly hindered as there is no direct connection linking SR-58 to I-5, so travelers are forced to take congested streets through central Bakersfield to connect to I-5.

The *Centennial Corridor State Route 58/99 Freight Improvement Project* is crucial to enhancing east-west freight movement and would make our national freight transportation network more secure and resilient, while reducing regional traffic congestion and decreasing the amount of vehicle emissions that too often get stuck in the Central Valley air basin. According to figures generated in the Federal Highway Administration's STEAM benefit analysis model program, this project would save Californian motorists and freight truckers approximately 1.9 million hours in travel time annually.

Again, we strongly support the City's *Centennial Corridor State Route 58/99 Freight Improvement Project* grant application. By utilizing local funds to cover 17.9% of this project cost and guided by a multi-agency coalition known as the Thomas Roads Improvement Program, we applaud the City's efforts to update our important transportation network. It is our

understanding that this project fulfills the stated intent of the INFRA grant program by bringing about significant, long-term improvements to America's transportation infrastructure. We respectfully request your thorough consideration of the City's application. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact either of us. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



KEVIN McCARTHY
House Majority Leader



DAVID G. VALADAO
Member of Congress