



State of New Mexico

Michelle Lujan Grisham
Governor

August 16, 2023

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

Re: Interstate 40 Bridge Replacement Project at Milepost 20.7

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

I am writing to express my support for the Interstate 40 (I-40) Bridge Replacement Project at Milepost 29.7 Project (the Project), which will improve the safety and resiliency of an east-west freight highway corridor of national and regional significance in New Mexico. The New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT) is requesting federal funding for this Project through 2023-2024 INFRA, the Nationally Significant Multimodal Freight & Highway Projects program.

Hydraulic analyses performed on the corridor indicate that parts of the I-40 roadway are subject to overtopping during 50-year and 100-year storm events. These events shut down I-40 immediately east of the bridges, resulting in interruptions and significant diversions of national and regional freight traffic. In addition, less severe storms cause frequent flooding in these same sections, temporarily closing one or both lanes, resulting in congestion and safety issues.

To address this situation, NMDOT has prioritized the replacement of two I-40 bridges (No. 6560 EB and No. 6561 WB) and the adjacent frontage road structure at NM118 (No. 5394) over the South Fork Puerco River. The Project also includes repaving one-mile of I-40 travel lanes. The designs of the replacement bridges will enhance the hydraulic conditions and prevent the corridor system from flooding at various flow events. Each of the I-40 bridges will be designed to operate as a 2-lane structure while efficiently adjusting to carry 3-lanes of traffic as part of a potential future interstate widening phase that will address growing freight and highway traffic on this key corridor.

I-40 is one of three major truck freight routes that cross New Mexico and is a major truck route on the National Highway System, with high truck volume and a high percentage of truck traffic as

defined by the Federal Highway Administration. Truck drivers transporting imports across the United States from the San Pedro ports in Southern California reach their eleven hours of service limit within New Mexico. I-40 in New Mexico is also within an eleven-hour journey of key freight generators in Texas and Arizona. An unplanned diversion or significant congestion on this corridor would significantly impact the health and safety of long-haul truck drivers.

The Project is approximately 4 miles east of Gallup, New Mexico, immediately north of Navajo Nation land. This segment of I-40 serves as a vital regional connector for the Navajo Nation to Gallup, considered the Indian Capital of the world, commercial hub of the Navajo Nation, and the longtime home of Southwest Indian Foundation. Mitigating the impact of recurrent flooding on this section of I-40 will serve to ensure the socio-economic health and mobility of communities in the Greater Gallup area.

With preliminary design of the bridges by NMDOT underway, a federal grant award is crucial for full funding of Project construction and will allow NMDOT to expedite the completion of the project.

Thank you for your consideration of this important freight highway Project under the 2023-2024 INFRA Program. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michelle Lujan Grisham". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Michelle Lujan Grisham
Governor