



**DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
STATE OF NEW MEXICO**

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Governor

JEFF M. WITTE
Secretary

August 16, 2023

Office of the Secretary of Transportation
2023-2024 Multimodal Project Discretionary Grant Opportunity (MPDG)
Rural Surface Transportation Grant program (Rural)
Notice of Funding Opportunity

Re: United States Highway 380 Rural Highway Improvement Project

Dear Grant Reviewers:

I am writing to express my support for the **United States Highway 380 (US 380) Rural Highway Improvement Project**, which will improve the safety and performance of this nationally and regionally significant east-west corridor in New Mexico. The New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT) is requesting federal funding for this Project through the 2023-2024 MPDG Rural Surface Transportation Grant program (Rural).

US 380 from Roswell, New Mexico, to the Texas state line is a two-lane, east-west rural highway just 100 miles north of the New Mexico border. It connects communities across Southwest and serves diverse freight, agricultural, and tourist users along the way. One of the primary freight users of this corridor is traffic associated with the oil and gas production. New Mexico is a leading producer of crude oil and natural gas – and much of this oil and gas comes from the Permian Basin in southeast New Mexico and west Texas. US 380 is how this oil and gas gets from this basin to other parts of the country to fuel America's economy.

The highway also services the regional agricultural economy and is used by cattle ranchers and farmers to get livestock and crops like pecans, hay, peppers, corn, wheat, peanuts and cotton to market. In addition, retirees, families, and other adventurers with campers and various recreational vehicles drive US 380 to access Ruidoso and the Lincoln National Forest, the Bitter Lake National Wildlife Refuge, Roswell's famous International UFO Museum and Research Center, and fishing spots and hiking trails along the Pecos River – which US 380 crosses just east of Roswell. This stretch of highway also connects Tatum residents, a town with less than 300 households, to jobs as well as shops and services in bigger neighboring municipalities.

These diverse drivers share the rural 2-lane road, one lane in each direction, and because of the constraints and existing conditions, the result has been dangerous – often lethal. Slow trucks and farm traffic back up on the two-lane road and impatient drivers attempt unsafe lane changes because there are (except for one small stretch) no passing lanes. Our proposed improvements to US 380 – adding passing

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lanes at key intervals (every 7-10 miles) while also improving the pavement conditions – would greatly increase safety outcomes and transform this corridor into a way to safely connect communities, facilitate the flow of commerce, and provide safe passage for local and visitors alike. These proposed highway improvements align with the National Roadway Safety Strategy and DOT's commitment to take “substantial, comprehensive action to significantly reduce serious and fatal injuries on the Nation's roadways.” With this funding, we can build the **US 380 Rural Highway Improvement Project** and make that vision a reality for an important region in southern New Mexico.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in purple ink, appearing to read "JM Witte", with a large, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Jeff M. Witte