

Lea County Sheriff's Office



August 1, 2023

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

Re: US 380 Safety Improvements

Dear Grant Reviewers:

Please accept this letter in support of using MPDG funds to make safety improvements to US 380. Highway 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. Highway US 380 is how this oil and gas gets from this basin to other parts of the country to fuel America's economy.

The road 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 Highway US 380 to access Ruidoso and the Lincoln National Forest, the Bitter Lake National Wildlife Refuge, Roswell's famous UFO and alien museum, and fishing spots and hiking trails along the Pecos River – which Highway US 380 crosses just east of Roswell. This stretch of Highway also allows Tatum residents, a town with less than 300 households, to access jobs as well as shops and services in bigger neighboring municipalities.

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These diverse drivers share the rural 2-lane road, one lane in each direction, and because of the constraints and existing condition, 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 Highway US 380 – adding passing 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 US 380 improvements align with 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 make that vision a reality for a stretch of southern New Mexico.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "C. Helton".