

THOMAS "T.J." SHOPE
SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE
1700 WEST WASHINGTON, SUITE H
PHOENIX, ARIZONA 85007-2844
CAPITOL PHONE: (602) 926-3012
TOLL FREE: 1-800-352-8404
tshope@azleg.gov

DISTRICT 8

COMMITTEES:
RULES,
Vice-Chairman
EDUCATION
NATURAL RESOURCES
ENERGY & WATER
ETHICS,
Chairman
ADMINISTRATION,
Chairman
LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

February 19, 2020

The Honorable Elaine L. Chao
Secretary
United States Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Madam Secretary:

I am writing this letter to support the Arizona Department of Transportation's (ADOT) grant application for the 2020 Infrastructure for Rebuilding America (INFRA) discretionary grant program to fund Interstate 10 (I-10) corridor widening, including a major bridge expansion in the Gila River Indian Community (GRIC). I-10 is designated as an Arizona Key Commerce Corridor with its significant freight and recreational traffic going through this rural area and is currently subject to congestion and repeated crashes resulting in hours –long closures.

I-10 is a major transportation route for freight traffic through the southern portion of the U.S. and provides a principal link for freight traffic from the ports of southern California and for international commerce to and from Mexico and Central America through Arizona. Of the 70,450 vehicles that travel on the rural segment of I-10 in the study area on a daily basis, 13 percent are freight-hauling and commercial trucks.

As a result, nationally, a significant amount of freight is transported along the route daily. The route is critical for Arizona's economy as well, with I-10 linking Arizona's largest metropolitan areas of Phoenix and Tucson. I-10 also runs through Houston, Arizona's top export market with a 2018 value at \$120 billion. Locally, the route serves GRIC by providing connections to employment, medical, educational, and other necessary services both within and outside of the Community.

Arizona has addressed many of the most pressing needs along I-10 within Arizona. Major capacity and safety improvements have been made within the Phoenix and Tucson metropolitan areas and widening projects have recently been completed just south of the project area.

ADOT is proposing to address the present highway deficiencies by adding new general-purpose lanes in east and westbound sections beginning in Casa Grande and extending west across and including the Gila River Bridge. These improvements will address a major capacity and safety concern along I-10 and replace the functionally obsolete Gila River crossing with a new six-lane span, complete with shoulders and improved safety barriers.

Elaine L. Chao
February 28, 2020
Page 2

ADOT, in coordination with GRIC and the Maricopa Association of Governments, is currently evaluating alternatives that will address necessary improvements to the remaining two-lane section of I-10 across the Community. The proposed project will provide much needed relief to the congestion and safety concerns along this stretch of highway.

We believe this project is one of the most necessary and important projects pending in our state and fits well within the INFRA guidelines and criteria. We fully support ADOT's efforts to address the safety, reliability and capacity of I-10 and hope that you will give their INFRA application your full and fair consideration.

Sincerely,

Thomas R. Shope
Speaker Pro Tempore
Arizona House of Representatives
District 8