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March 15, 2021

Honorable Pete Buttigieg
Secretary of the United States Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Subject: Support of Santa Barbara County Association of Governments (SBCAG) Infrastructure for Rebuilding America (INFRA) grant application for completion of the Santa Barbara U.S. 101 Multimodal Corridor Project.

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

I am writing in support of Santa Barbara County Association of Governments (SBCAG) INFRA program grant application to complete funding for the Santa Barbara U.S. 101 Multimodal Corridor project. This project is in the final phase of a more than 15-year publicly supported effort to provide multiple transportation benefits on U.S. 101 to reduce congestion, improve quality of life, support interregional goods movement, foster environmental sustainability, increase safety and multimodal access, and create access to jobs.

The U.S. 101 corridor is the only major highway connecting the central coast to both northern and southern California. It supports the region's \$10.3 billion agricultural industry by moving about 23 million tons of goods annually. The project limits include the most critical portion of U.S. 101 along the central coast, as it is the only designated Critical Urban Freight Corridor (CUFC) in the region. Multiple regional and state plans and strategies recognize the importance of improving the corridor as one of California's top priorities.

Santa Barbara U.S. 101 Multimodal Corridor project components include:

- **Completion of a critical lifeline arterial, U.S. 101.** Due to the narrow coastal plain and adjacent coastal mountains, the project serves as a lifeline route for several coastal communities in Santa Barbara County and California's Central Coast as a whole. It is the backbone for local and interregional goods movement. The significance of the U.S. 101 arterial is highlighted as the only viable interregional alternative to Interstate 5 freeway when it closes during heavy winter storm events that occur over the grapevine in Kern County. The corridor's significance was further highlighted after its nearly two-week closure following a tragic Montecito debris flow event in January 2018.
- **Encourages mode shift.** The project will close a gap on U.S. 101 by adding a peak-hour carpool lane in each direction to connect to existing, designated carpool lanes on both ends of the project.

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This will increase transportation opportunities for commuters, multimodal travelers, and goods carriers. It relieves congestion while encouraging more efficient higher occupancy trips, including express bus services between Ventura and Santa Barbara. Related corridor improvements are also improving commuter rail service from Los Angeles and Ventura, coastal trail enhancements, and bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

- **Innovative project delivery method** utilizing Construction Manager/General Contractor (CM/GC), which will minimize risks and unknown costs going into construction and extend that strong partnership among the agencies to our contracting partner Granite Construction. By this summer, seven and a half miles of the U.S. 101 will be under construction leaving the final two and a half miles to be fully funded and completed to realize the full benefits that the corridor will offer.
- **Benefits Underserved Communities in Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties.** The completion of the project will address various underrepresented and low-income community needs. With the carpool lane addition, low-income households who rely on carpooling and bus transit will benefit from anticipated travel time savings. These include the low-income communities in the cities of Santa Barbara and Carpinteria, as well as disadvantaged communities in the cities of Ventura and Oxnard in Ventura County. This will provide reliable options for accessing jobs as well as education, social services and health services offered between the two regions.
- **Supports strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions** through carpool/vanpool incentives, reducing idling due to unnecessary congestion, improving travel time reliability, and increasing multiple active transportation options.

SBCAG is committing substantial local funding to complete the final phase of the corridor project using Measure A, a local Santa Barbara County transportation sales tax measure. The corridor is the highest regional transportation priority in Santa Barbara County. Collectively, non-federal sources represent nearly 80 percent of the total project cost, demonstrating a strong local contribution. While there has been significant local and state investment in the project to date, partnership with the federal government is critical to help complete this final phase.

I firmly believe the Santa Barbara U.S. 101 Multimodal Corridor project makes a significant impact for residents and businesses in Santa Barbara County, Central Coast region, State of California, and the nation. For these reasons, I strongly support SBCAG's INFRA program grant application and urge your full consideration of this project.

Sincerely,



Kevin G. Walthers, Ph.D.
Superintendent/President

cc: Santa Barbara County Federal Legislative Delegation
Marjie Kim, Executive Director, SBCAG
Sarkes Khachek, Director of Programming, SBCAG
Lauren Bianchi Klemann, Government Affairs/Public Information Manager, SBCAG