

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 1, 2017

The Honorable Elaine Chao
Secretary
Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Chao,

We are writing to express our strong support for the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (DOTD) Infrastructure for Rebuilding America (INFRA) Grant Program application.

Louisiana DOTD is requesting \$50 million in INFRA funding that would allow for the construction of a new four-lane bridge over the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway (GIWW) on Louisiana Highway 23 in Plaquemines Parish. The existing GIWW crossing consists of an east bound tunnel and a west bound moveable bridge that are each decades old and in desperate need of replacement.

This project is an ideal candidate for INFRA as it meets each of the four critical criteria established by the Department of Transportation. First, the project supports national and regional economic vitality by eliminating delays in commerce, for both trucks and vessels, associated with the current moveable bridge over the internationally significant GIWW. The crossing has major access implications for two nearby refineries, off shore oil and gas facilities, and the Port of Plaquemines. This new structure would also provide much needed, unimpeded direct access for the Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base New Orleans, which lies only four miles south of the structure and serves each branch of the U.S. military including the active duty, reserve forces, and the National Guard. As it relates to leveraging federal funds, the application does so with the strategic use of a Public Private Partnership (P3), whereby the INFRA grant funding will serve as only approximately 30 percent of the total project cost. Another important element is that DOTD will reserve the INFRA grant award for capital construction costs only, utilizing other sources for preconstruction, operations and maintenance costs.

The private- partner will also be required to meet rigorous modern safety standards, as well as construct a bicycle and pedestrian friendly lane on the structure in a manner that prevents cross-over accidents with vehicles. DOTD has committed to negotiating the P3 in a manner that shifts risk from the federal and state government to the private-partner and will have the private-partner operate and maintain the existing structures during the construction of the new bridge and DOTD

will establish safety performance measures for the private-partner to ensure that outcomes such as construction timeframes and engineering specifications are met.

Finally, this project is unique in that it serves both urban and rural communities. The crossing is located within the New Orleans, Louisiana metropolitan area but the Parish and many surrounding areas served by this structure are undeniably rural in nature.

As you continue to evaluate proposals to strengthen our Nation's infrastructure we respectfully request your favorable consideration of the Louisiana DOTD INFRA grant application.

Sincerely,



Sen. Bill Cassidy, M.D.



Rep. Cedric Richmond



Rep. Ralph Abraham



Rep. Clay Higgins