

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-1803

July 18, 2022

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
Secretary, U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE
Washington, DC 20590

Secretary Buttigieg:

I write to again express my support for the National Infrastructure Project Assistance Program (Mega) Grant application submitted by the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (LADOTD) for the I-10 Calcasieu River Bridge Project.

The current I-10 Calcasieu River Bridge opened in 1952 and was designed for a traffic load of 37,000 daily crossings. With an expected 50-year life span, the bridge was constructed as part of the U.S. Highway 90 system but was integrated into the I-10 corridor in the 1960s. Over the last 70 years, Southwest Louisiana has grown exponentially, which has led to increased traffic demand along I-10 from the east and west interchanges with I-210. The Calcasieu River Bridge now sees an average of over 80,000 daily crossings.

This project meets the Mega Grant standards in that it will alleviate significant congestion issues on a highly traveled corridor and will generate national and regional economic benefits. Specifically, the interstate segment encompassing the project area experiences a reduction in travel lanes from six to four, leading to bottlenecks, time delays, and heightened safety risks. While the bridge is structurally sound, it lacks modern safety features. Further, the I-10 Calcasieu River Bridge is an important gateway for commercial activity along the Gulf Coast, including major industrial and LNG projects in Southwest Louisiana. If approved, LADOTD will utilize Mega Grant funding and the State's commitment of \$335 million to leverage gap financing through a Public-Private Partnership (P3).

Replacing the I-10 Calcasieu River Bridge is critical to the economic future of Southwest Louisiana and the entire nation. This region has become a global leader in energy exports. Industrial projects like Sasol, Cheniere, Sabine Pass LNG, Driftwood LNG, Magnolia LNG, Cameron LNG, Venture Global LNG, and others are integral to the United States' energy strategy. This is especially true as we have increased LNG exports to the European Union in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Further, I-10 is a significant corridor for the transport of agricultural commodities, energy products, and other commercial activity between Houston and New Orleans. With Mega Grant funding, Louisiana can take necessary action to increase the capacity and safety of the I-10 Calcasieu River Bridge. Doing so would provide extensive economic benefits for the whole nation.

Completion of a new I-10 Calcasieu River Bridge is a critical infrastructure priority for the Louisiana delegation. My office has worked closely with state and local leaders for the past five years to advance this bridge project, and we appreciate your thoughtful consideration of the State's application for federal resources. I welcome the opportunity to discuss this project further. Please contact me if you have any questions regarding the State's Mega Grant application.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Clay Higgins". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "C" and a long, sweeping underline.

Clay Higgins
Member of Congress