

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

February 17, 2023

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

Secretary Buttigieg,

In a letter from the Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) Office of Civil Rights on January 18, 2023, the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (LaDOTD) was made aware of a complaint and investigation alleging discrimination and violation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. This complaint is in reference to the planning and development of the I-49 Lafayette Connector Project, which will extend I-49 from I-10 to the Lafayette Regional Airport.

The I-49 Connector would consist of an elevated multi-lane highway that follows along a similar path to the current Southwest Evangeline Thruway. Along each side of the future I-49 will be a frontage road system allowing local access and ensuring continued connectivity for the surrounding communities. This construction project follows the footprint of long-existing infrastructure. Accusations that the project is "racist" are not grounded in reality.

I-49 is a critical transportation corridor for South Louisiana, and the development of the I-49 Connector will enhance infrastructure and economic development in the area. This highway serves as a hurricane evacuation route, a major trade corridor, and a highly traveled thoroughfare for local residents. Moving or stalling this development jeopardizes economic development efforts and much needed infrastructure improvements.

The role of the Department of Transportation should be to ensure the efficient and safe movement of people and goods. Allowing critical infrastructure projects to become embattled due to unfounded claims of racial discrimination is a barrier to progress. I urge the Department of Transportation to swiftly resolve this investigation and continue work on the I-49 connector.

The I-49 Connector project will be essential to the growth of the Lafayette, LA community, and locals of all backgrounds will see the benefits of this project for generations to come. I appreciate your attention to this matter, and my staff and I are available to assist should you require any additional information.

Respectfully,



Clay Higgins
Member of Congress