

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

August 18, 2023

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, S.E.
Washington, D.C. 20590

Secretary Buttigieg,

I write in support of the Multimodal Project Discretionary Grant (MPDG) application submitted by the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (LADOTD) for the I-10 Calcasieu River Bridge Project for the following discretionary grant programs: the Nationally Significant Multimodal Freight & Highway Projects Grant Program (INFRA) and the Rural Surface Transportation Grant Program (RURAL).

The current I-10 Calcasieu River Bridge, which debuted in 1952 as part of the U.S. 90 highway system, was designed for a traffic load of 37,000 crossings per day and a 50-year life span. It was later integrated into I-10 in the 1960s. The bridge helped to ease congestion in Lake Charles and allowed ships to pass freely beneath its 135-foot-high span. Over the last 70 years, development in the region has significantly increased traffic demand. In 2016, the average daily crossings exceeded 80,000 along I-10 in the Calcasieu River Bridge section.

This project meets the INFRA/RURAL grant standards for alleviating serious congestion issues on a highly traveled corridor. Specifically, the interstate segment encompassing the project area experiences a reduction in travel lanes from six to four lanes of traffic. This leads to major bottlenecks, time delays, and increased safety risks. At this time, the bridge is structurally sound; however, it lacks modern safety features. If awarded, combined with the State's commitment, the MPDG grant will enable leveraging of gap financing through a Public-Private Partnership (P3).

Furthermore, this I-10 Calcasieu River Bridge project is a critical gateway point for industrial construction projects such as Sasol, Cheniere, Sabine Pass LNG, Driftwood LNG, Magnolia LNG, Cameron LNG, and many others. These projects create thousands of jobs and generate billions of dollars in economic development. Southwest Louisiana has become a global leader in energy exports. Additional lanes would expand the capacity of the vital I-10 corridor connecting Southwest Louisiana to Houston and New Orleans. The benefit from this strategic investment in Southwest Louisiana's infrastructure will be felt throughout our nation's supply chains.

This area has grown exponentially despite the COVID-19 pandemic and natural disasters that occurred in 2020 and early 2021. Hurricanes Laura and Delta devastated the region's economy and infrastructure. Investing in the I-10 Calcasieu River Bridge project would accelerate Southwest Louisiana's continued recovery and spur future economic growth.

The I-10 Calcasieu River Bridge project is a critical infrastructure priority for the Louisiana delegation. I appreciate your thoughtful consideration of the State's application. Please do not hesitate to contact my office if you have any questions about this MPDG grant request.

Respectfully,

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

Clay Higgins
Member of Congress