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Congress of the United States
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SUBCOMMITTEE ON
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SUBCOMMITTEE ON AFRICA,
GLOBAL HEALTH, AND HUMAN RIGHTS

November 2, 2011

The Honorable Raymond H. LaHood
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Re: Competitive Grant Application for U.S. DOT TIGER III Highway 92 Bridge Replacement Project

Dear Secretary LaHood:

I write to express my support for the Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department's (AHTD) Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery III Grant (TIGER III Discretionary Grant) application. If awarded, funds will be used to replace two weight-restricted bridges and widen the lanes and shoulders of the bridge approaches on Arkansas Highway 92 in rural Conway County and Van Buren County.

Since 2007, natural gas exploration in the north central region of Arkansas in an area geologically known as the Fayetteville Shale Play (FSP) has substantially increased. In 2009 the University of Arkansas reported that there were over 30,000 oil and natural gas-related jobs in Arkansas. However, the increased freight traffic in the FSP area has adversely affected highways and bridges. It is important that the transportation infrastructure in this region be improved to sustain jobs and continue critical rural economic development. AHTD has stated that this project will not only improve the competitiveness of the FSP region, but it will improve the competitiveness of the United States by connecting local natural resources to larger national markets.

AHTD notes that timber haulers would also benefit from this project. Their ability to travel on the bridges will decrease trip length by as many as 56 miles. It will also lower motor fuel consumption resulting in a potential increase in family income for many of these small business owners. The reduction of the trip length will also reduce the time needed for each round trip, thus allowing each hauler to transport more loads in a day. Also, the operation of commercial vehicles in excess of the posted limits on the regional roadways present both a maintenance and safety hazard due to roadway or bridge failure.

The Honorable Raymond H. LaHood

November 2, 2011

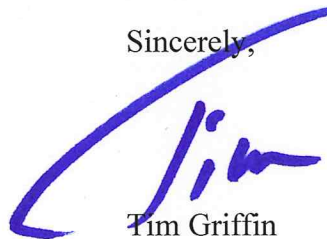
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I understand the importance of infrastructure projects to economic development and our ability to compete internationally for jobs. I also understand that our federal government is facing an overwhelming mountain of debt that is getting worse every day. Forty-two cents of every dollar the federal government spends, including TIGER Grants, is borrowed; about half of the money borrowed is from foreign countries, including the Chinese government. I am concerned about the burden of debt we are passing onto our children and grandchildren. I also understand that, although money for TIGER grants is already appropriated by Congress to be spent, there is no such thing as "free money."

As a result of our nation's dire fiscal situation, I am advocating only for infrastructure projects of the highest priority for Arkansas's Second Congressional District such as this project for highway improvement. In fact, several TIGER III Discretionary grant applications are being submitted for projects in my District, and I have the unenviable task of deciding which projects will be the best use of hard-earned taxpayer dollars. I support AHTD's proposed project for Arkansas Highway 92 without reservation.

Thank you for your full and fair consideration of this application. Please keep me apprised of its progress by contacting Jill Cox in my Little Rock office at (501) 324-5941 or at Jill.Cox@mail.house.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jim". The signature is stylized and includes a large, sweeping flourish that extends upwards and to the left.

Tim Griffin
Member of Congress