

J.D. STRONG
SECRETARY OF ENVIRONMENT



BRAD HENRY
GOVERNOR

STATE OF OKLAHOMA
OFFICE OF THE
SECRETARY OF ENVIRONMENT

August 19, 2010

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

Re: TIGER II funding for Claremore, Oklahoma's "Grade Separated Freight Railway Project"

Dear Secretary LaHood:

As cities and regions around the country begin to face mounting environmental problems, I am always happy to support solutions aimed at tackling these important issues. In this instance, I am urging you to select the subject project – construction of an elevated freight railway corridor – for funding under the second round of Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grant applications.

This project seeks to build a lengthy section of elevated freight railway by means of bridges and embankments to alleviate and address growing congestion, safety, and delay issues. Because the section of track in question bisects an entire community (Claremore, OK) and sits at the crossroads of three highways, Claremore's Main Street, and two Class I railroads, elevating the railway would literally serve to reunify the community and offer a one-stop solution to reducing or eliminating congestion, delay and safety incidents in the community.

It is my understanding that this cluster of transportation modes in the City of Claremore currently carries a combined auto/truck ADT of approximately 50,000 and an average of 45 freight trains daily. As a result of the intersection of these two travel modes, delays and congestion produce air pollutants in the Tulsa region, which already is threatened with ozone non-attainment. (A similar railway project in Olathe, Kansas to the north resulted in such significant air quality improvements that the State of Kansas was able to offer \$2 million in environmental budgeting to help finance the project). We have analyzed the expected savings to numerous emissions categories, as well as fuel savings generated as a result of the proposed project, and feel confident that these benefits alone justify funding the project.

There are myriad components making this project even more beneficial to the quality of life for the citizens and visitors in Claremore. This project includes the addition of new sidewalks at all the proposed grade separations and enhances public safety by separating forms of transportation allowing free flow of emergency vehicles and school buses, which were formerly hampered by train delays.

As we look towards the future and evaluate ways to work with our transportation partners to preserve the environment, I believe this project is a prime example of following through with that mission.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. D. Strong".

J. D. Strong

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