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February 19, 2026

The Honorable Sean Duffy
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Secretary Duffy:

I am writing to express my support for Kern Council of Governments' (Kern COG) application for a Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) grant of \$1,324,000. If awarded, this funding would support the I-40 Extension from I-15 to I-5 Corridor Plan for California State Route 58 by advancing a comprehensive feasibility and economic analysis of the corridor and its connecting routes. This effort will evaluate the requirements to upgrade State Route 58 to Interstate design standards and identify prioritized multimodal improvements along one of the West Coast's most critical east-west freight corridors.

The Route 58 corridor is essential for improving regional and national transportation networks, as it links Interstate 40 and Interstate 15 with Interstate 5, providing a key connection between Midwest and East Coast freight gateways and Central and Northern California. Route 58 serves approximately 21,000 daily travelers, with truck volumes reaching up to 37 percent in certain segments. It is designated on the Strategic Highway Network (STRAHNET) and the National Highway Freight Network and serves as the only year-round, all-weather trans-Sierra route. With planned intermodal rail facilities in Shafter, Mojave, and Barstow, freight demand and last-mile truck activity along the corridor are expected to increase substantially.

This project aligns with the BUILD Grant Program's mission by enhancing safety, improving freight mobility, and strengthening a nationally significant corridor essential to regional and interstate commerce. If awarded, this funding would allow the region to address safety challenges and reduce congestion while strengthening supply chain reliability and supporting continued economic growth in Kern County and the surrounding region.

I firmly support Kern COG's grant application to advance the I-40 Extension from I-15 to I-5 Corridor Plan for State Route 58. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



VINCE FONG
Member of Congress