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**MISSOURI HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES**

John F. Black

State Representative
District 137

April 28, 2022

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

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

I am writing to express my support for FIX I-44: Freight, Innovation and Safety for the Ozarks project. The Missouri Department of Transportation is requesting federal funding through the UDOT Multimodal Project Discretionary Grant for improvements to I-44 through Springfield, Missouri that will improve freight mobility, safety, economic vitality, and community connections.

Interstate 44 is a major east-west corridor that begins in Texas, traverses through Oklahoma, and terminates on the eastern border of Missouri at St. Louis. It provides a vital freight corridor for the country and for our metro area of nearly half a million people. 41 percent of traffic on I-44 is over-the-road freight haulers and this number is projected to increase.

The corridor helps facilitate the movement of goods locally from a strong manufacturing sector with nationally significant clusters in stainless steel tank manufacturing, remanufacturing, food production, and logistics. Springfield, the third largest city in Missouri is the center of an economic area comprising twenty-seven counties in southern Missouri and northern Arkansas. I-44 is a critical connection for the region to the rest of the United States.

The FIX I-44 project would add capacity and pedestrian connections, improve pavement condition, and reconfigure a major interchange at Route 13/I-44. These critical improvements will ensure that local drivers, regional freight movement, and tourist traffic to Branson and the Ozarks can safely coexist, while improving connectivity between the north and south sides of I-44.

This project is important to the state of Missouri, the Springfield region, and my legislative district. I urge you to fund this essential freight project on I-44 and State Highway 13.

Thank you for your consideration.

Very Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John F. Black". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "J" and "B".

John F. Black
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