



DEPARTMENT OF
**Civil and
Environmental Engineering**
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

May 10, 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:

On behalf of the Mid-America Freight Coalition (MAFC) at the University of Wisconsin - Madison, I am writing to express our dedicated support for FIX I-44: Freight, Innovation and Safety for the Ozarks project. The Missouri Department of Transportation is requesting federal funding 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.

Locally, the corridor helps facilitate the movement of goods from a strong manufacturing sector with nationally significant clusters in stainless steel tank manufacturing, remanufacturing, food production, and logistics. Springfield is the third largest city in Missouri and 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 Kansas Expressway/Route 13. 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 MAFC and our partner State Departments of Transportation as a key regional freight corridor. I-44 provides regional connectivity and is one of the region's major freight corridors. MAFC will support the Missouri Department of Transportation in this effort by providing a regional perspective on the economic value, connectivity opportunities, the safety and delay related to, and impacting freight movement in Missouri and the region. MAFC will also reach out to all MAFC State partners to identify innovation, infrastructure and operational solutions, and peer state input to ensure the I-44 projects solutions exceed expectation for all stakeholders.

We encourage you to consider the FIX I-44 project and the resulting benefits of safety, pedestrian connectivity, reduced congestion, and improved freight mobility. We appreciate your review of MoDOT's application and hope to hear good news soon!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Soyoung Ahn". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

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