



May 4th, 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 Steelman Transportation, 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 is an important project for our company. We are very heavy users of both I-44 and Route 13. One of the major issues we face is the back up of Route 13 south bound at the I-44 interchange. This back up costs our company and drivers valuable time when transporting goods in and out of the Springfield Area. We encourage you to consider the FIX I-44 project and the resulting benefits of safety, pedestrian connectivity, reduced congestion, and improved freight mobility.

Sincerely,

Wayne Sheets
President

Steelman Transportation

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Wayne Sheets', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.