



July 15, 2022

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

RE: Bridge Investment Program for the I-35 Bridge Replacement Project in Oklahoma County

Honorable Secretary Buttigieg:

As Chairman of the Oklahoma City Riverfront Redevelopment Authority, I am writing in support of the Oklahoma Department of Transportation's application for a Bridge Investment Program grant to assist with the I-35 Bridge Replacement Project (Project). The Project is very important for the Oklahoma River and our downtown core. Since the I-35 bridges could soon become structurally deficient, replacing them is a top priority.

The Project also affords a tremendous opportunity to make a unique and lasting impact on the community. Since these bridges were built many decades ago, the Oklahoma River has been dammed and now hosts elite national and international paddlesport events. The Boathouse District, located on the shores of the Oklahoma River, is home to world-class boathouses and a one-of-a-kind whitewater center and is an official U.S. Olympic and Paralympic training site.

The current I-35 bridges have ten piers in the Oklahoma River. This prevents the venue from being classified at the highest level for paddlesport racing. A primary goal for Project stakeholders is that the new bridges over the Oklahoma River have no piers and, instead, span the entire river. This would bring additional cost. However, such a design is vital to support the tremendous investment our community has made in and along the Oklahoma River. I have been advised that, based on the Interchange Capacity Study and the Long Span Bridge Study, design of long-span bridges over the Oklahoma River is both feasible and supported by community stakeholders.

Also, the new bridges would provide additional travel lanes in both directions and wider inside and outside shoulders. The current I-35 bridges are functionally obsolete, with fewer travel lanes and inadequate shoulder widths in both directions.

The Oklahoma River includes 13 miles of paved multi-use recreation trails that have reinvigorated outdoor recreation in the area. To support these activities and facilitate alternative travel modes, the new I-35 bridges will also accommodate bicyclists and pedestrians, separated from dangerous vehicle traffic by concrete barriers. This will include access to the paved trails on both sides of the Oklahoma River.

The new bridges and multimodal connections will also provide unique and needed access to the largely Hispanic Capitol Hill District and the Historically Disadvantaged Community located south of the Oklahoma River.

For these reasons, I strongly support the Project and urge that it be fully funded. Thank you for your consideration. Please let me know if you have questions or need additional information.

Sincerely,



Gary Marrs, Chairman  
Oklahoma City Riverfront Redevelopment Authority  
420 W Main Street, Suite 210  
Oklahoma City, OK 73102  
(405) 297-2212  
[okcparks@okc.gov](mailto:okcparks@okc.gov)

c: Aubrey McDermid, Surrogate General Manager  
Melinda McMillan-Miller, Parks and Recreation Director  
Jerod Beatty, Assistant Municipal Counselor