

Wednesday, November 8, 2023

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

RE: Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) Grant opportunity for Bridging the Gap: New Multimodal Connections on I-35 over the Oklahoma River

Honorable Secretary Buttigieg:

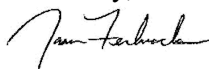
On behalf of EMBARK, I am writing to voice our organization's strong support of the Oklahoma Department of Transportation's (ODOT) application for the RAISE Grant for Bridging the Gap: New Multimodal Connections on I-35 over the Oklahoma River. This project is a marquis project in the downtown core of Oklahoma City. The I-35 bridges are perilously close to becoming structurally deficient at future bridge inspection.

Perhaps the most unique aspect of this I-35 bridge replacement project is the tremendous community impacts that the bridge replacement will offer the Oklahoma City community. Since these bridges were built over three decades ago, the Oklahoma River has been dammed and is now host to elite national rowing races and several collegiate rowing teams including the University of Oklahoma and University of Central Oklahoma. In addition, near the edge of the river is the new Riverport Complex which is home to US Olympic Team training.

Along the edge of downtown Oklahoma City runs the scenic Oklahoma River, a 7-mile-long waterway supporting a transit connection via Oklahoma River Cruises ferry transit service and 13 miles of paved trails that has reinvented outdoor recreation in the capital city. The new I-35 bridge would accommodate bicycle and pedestrians on the bridge and separated from traffic with a concrete barrier. Access to the paved trails on both the sides of the river will be provided off the new I-35 bridge. This will improve the access to 10 interconnected trails that cover over 80 miles and can take you to almost every point in Oklahoma City. This project includes connections to the First Americans Museum and the largely Hispanic Capitol Hill district and Historically Disadvantaged Community located on the south side of the Oklahoma River.

EMBARK strongly supports the New Multimodal Connections on I-35 over the Oklahoma River Project in Oklahoma County for its vital contribution to the region, state and nation. We strongly urge your support of full funding for the project. Thank you for your consideration and please feel free to call on us should you have questions or if you require additional information.

Sincerely,



Jason Ferbrache
Director
EMBARK