

Tuesday, February 6, 2024

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

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

On behalf of the Greater Oklahoma City, an economic development organization with over 3,000 members, I am writing to voice our organization's emphatic support for the Oklahoma Department of Transportation's (ODOT) RAISE grant application for **"Bridging the Gap: New Multimodal Connections over the Oklahoma River"**. This landmark project is a key component of the Interstate 35 bridge replacement project. The project is designed to become a separate bicycle and pedestrian bridge adjacent to I-35 which would provide access across the Oklahoma River. The location of the bicycle/pedestrian bridge is in a fast-growing district close to downtown Oklahoma City which boasts tremendous attributes.

These attributes include a location next to major interstate highways, I-35 and I-40. The Oklahoma River itself features elite-level rowing competitions, U.S. Olympic Training designation, sophisticated boathouses, and a "Riversport" destination including urban whitewater rapids. Further, in an exciting recent development directly in the vicinity of the planned bridge, The Chickasaw Nation and many tribal partners operate the world-class First Americans Museum (FAM), showcasing the nation's rich Native American heritage. The Chickasaw Nation is currently investing an incredible \$400 million to construct the OKANA Resort and an indoor water park next to the museum. This area is becoming known as the Horizons District, including FAM/OKANA and the historically disadvantaged Capitol Hill Neighborhood.

The Oklahoma River has reinvented outdoor recreation in Oklahoma City as it runs along the edge of downtown. In addition to the previously mentioned river sports opportunities, the river provides a seven-mile-long waterway and 13 miles of paved trails. The new bridge would provide a safer independent facility for bicycle and pedestrian access to amenities and residents on both sides of the river. The bridge will further link up with 10 interconnected trails that cover over 80 miles and can take you to almost any point in Oklahoma City.

In conclusion, I would like to again underscore the Chamber's vocal support for ODOT's RAISE Grant application. The vision for replacing the I-35 bridges must include enhanced opportunities for all our residents to enjoy the tremendous current and future benefits featured along the Oklahoma River.

Respectfully,



Christy Gillenwater, President/CEO, Greater OKC Chamber