

DAVID TRONE  
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March 25, 2021

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

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

On behalf of a multi-state coalition of government officials, we strongly support the grant application by Washington County and the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) for an Infrastructure for Rebuilding America (INFRA) grant to fund the I-81/Halfway Boulevard Freight Connection Project. This project will improve I-81 with operational capabilities and safety standards so it can facilitate movement of goods and services to states across the Eastern United States.

The I-81 corridor is an economic engine for the six states it traverses – Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, and New York – as well as for the rest of the country. The interstate provides direct freight services to these states, and it functions as a leading through-freight corridor for the Eastern United States as a whole. An estimated ten percent of the nation's gross domestic product, with an annual gross value of more than \$1.85 trillion dollars, is transported along I-81. This includes products like gravel, wood products, non-metal mineral products, plastics, animal feed, foodstuffs, pharmaceuticals, machinery, and motorized vehicles. The efficient movement of goods through the I-81 corridor is critically important to each state's economic competitiveness, as well as the region and the nation.

Maryland's 12-mile portion of I-81 carries an average of 19,400 trucks per day, and plays an integral part in supporting the entire corridor. The highway also serves as part of the Strategic Highways Network, through which it supports the Department of Defense's domestic operations, emergency mobilization, and peacetime operations. Due to its proximity to Washington, D.C., and other major metropolitan areas along the East Coast, the corridor's ability to handle emergency evacuations necessitated by terrorism or natural disaster is crucial.

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The project would include the widening of I-81 between MD-61/MD-68 and I-70 from four to six lanes. Widening this portion of I-81 would improve safety and traffic congestion throughout the corridor. The Maryland segment of I-81 carries some of the highest freight volumes in the nation by lane mile, with most signs pointing to a continued increase in traffic in the future. This high volume of truck traffic is nearly twice the level for which the roads were designed. While freight truck traffic contributes to the economies of all of our states, we must address the problems associated with high levels of traffic found at closely-spaced interchanges. Rising crash and fatality rates are a serious concern and can be prevented by improving interchanges and widening the roads. A safer and more efficient road along the Maryland portion of I-81 would positively impact all of our states.

We would like to express our strong support for Washington County and MDOT's INFRA grant application for the I-81/Halfway Boulevard Freight Connection Project and respectfully request that their proposal receive your full consideration.

Thank you for your continued efforts to improve our nation's transportation system.

Sincerely,

/s/  
David Trone  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Ben Cline  
Member of Congress

/s/  
H. Morgan Griffith  
Member of Congress

/s/  
John Joyce, M.D.  
Member of Congress

/s/  
John Katko  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Daniel Meuser  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Alex X. Mooney  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Jennifer Wexton  
Member of Congress