

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 15, 2021

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

RE: I-81/Halfway Boulevard Freight Connections: Providing Opportunities for Economic Growth, Equitable Job Access, and Improved Safety

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

We write to offer our full support for the I-81/Halfway Boulevard Freight Connection project, a joint application of the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) and Washington County for the Infrastructure for Rebuilding America (INFRA) grant program. This project will improve operational capacity and mobility needs, as well as address critical safety concerns along this designated freight corridor in Maryland's rural, Appalachian region. It also completes a long-planned county road that connects I-81 with MD 63 via Halfway Boulevard, unlocking business development opportunities and equitable access to jobs, and providing alternative routes for freight traffic to both I-81 and I-70, improving regional freight mobility.

The I-81 Corridor in Maryland no longer meets system performance requirements, resulting in a disruptive bottleneck that negatively affects the movement of freight along this nationally significant corridor. I-81 is estimated to carry 12 percent of the country's Gross Domestic Product per year. The Maryland portion alone carries more than 19,400 trucks per day, which falls within the top 1% of truck volume by lane mile in the entire nation. Truck volume will only continue to increase with the boom in logistics companies opening up in the region. Further, this has proven to be critical this past year during the COVID-19 health crisis with getting essential items delivered throughout the region and around our nation.

The widening of I-81 from MD 68 to beyond I-70, done in conjunction with the extension of Halfway Boulevard, will be an enormous boost to the regional economy. An investment in this project will support thousands of existing jobs already in the corridor and promote additional employment opportunities, all of which are accessible to the most challenged populations in the quad-state region

and adjacent Opportunity Zones. This project will also enable the development of new business parks, increase freight access and connectivity, expand critically needed truck parking, and reduce traffic congestion, travel times, air pollution, and safety hazards. Further, as an Electric Vehicle (EV) Ready corridor, I-81 connects to a network of EV charging locations in Maryland, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Virginia as green technology is advanced in the region to combat climate change.

We appreciate your strong consideration of this joint application for the I-81/Halfway Boulevard Freight Connection Project. This application represents the strong partnership between Maryland, Washington County, and the private sector to leverage all available resources to complete this priority project. A federal investment in our community will help ensure that I-81 remains a national asset for freight movement for decades to come – safely and responsibly moving critical goods and services around our nation.

Sincerely,

/s/

David Trone
Member of Congress

/s/

Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator

/s/

Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator

/s/

Steny H. Hoyer
Member of Congress

/s/

C.A. Dutch Ruppersberger
Member of Congress

/s/

John P. Sarbanes
Member of Congress

/s/

Andy Harris, M.D.
Member of Congress

/s/

Kweisi Mfume
Member of Congress

/s/

Anthony G. Brown
Member of Congress

/s/

Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress