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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

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April 26, 2022

The Honorable David E. Price
Chairman
Subcommittee on Transportation,
Housing and Urban Development, and
and Related Agencies
House Committee on Appropriations
2108 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mario Diaz-Balart
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Transportation,
Housing and Urban Development,
and Related Agencies
House Committee on Appropriations
374 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Price and Ranking Member Diaz-Balart:

I write to respectfully request federal funding for a much-needed overpass for County Road 539 (CR 539) located in my congressional district in New Jersey (NJ-04).

This roadway safety improvement project is my top transportation priority for submission and has widespread support from local elected officials, community associations, leaders of our large military base, and both military and civilian government engineers.

The CR 539 Overpass Project will provide immediate and meaningful improvements for all vehicular traffic on the heavily traveled CR 539 and New Jersey State Route 70—both of which serve as shore-point connectors to and from federal highways on the western side of New Jersey. The proposed overpass will also enhance access to mission-critical training maneuvers at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst (JB-MDL), America's only Army-Navy-Air Force installation.

Civilian drivers would take the new overpass road on CR 539 while large, slow-moving military tactical vehicles—integral to the national security mission at JB-MDL—would be able to travel more safely and in convoy formation *underneath* the overpass to training areas of the military base that are in essence separated and cut off by the intervening CR 539.

The sponsor for this \$10,000,000 project is the government of Ocean County. The County, in conjunction with the support of both the State of New Jersey and JB-MDL, has hosted planning meetings and briefings—which I have attended—underscoring the need for the project and its commitment to it. The County has agreed, in writing (see attached letter) to provide a 20 percent local sponsor match, now estimated at approximately \$2 million, **with the remaining \$8 million being the requested federal share.** The attached engineering report dated April 13, 2022 details the project including construction costs.

I note the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA) said in its enclosed letter that the overpass will improve “safety for travelers on CR 539 and New Jersey Route 70, two of the heaviest-traveled roads for Jersey Shore-bound traffic from the Philadelphia and Trenton areas.”

The NJTPA also points out that the “overpass would provide military vehicles with a much safer and more efficient connection to thousands of acres of base property on the east side of CR 539, allowing the military to expand and protect its vital national mission at this major training site for Army Reserve and National Guard forces.”

Similarly, the military strongly supports the project and is already planning to use its own Sustainment, Restoration, and Modernization (SRM) and/or the Defense Access Road (DAR) funding for near-by roadway enhancements within the base perimeter so that it can make the best use of the at-level underpass that would be created by the new overpass. Specifically, these enhancements, predicated on the construction of the overpass, will replace a system of padlocked gates and winding dirt roads, and provide the U.S. Army Reserve, the lead Army entity on JB-MDL, with direct access to the full base, enabling it to protect and expand its vital national training mission. The Army estimates it can train up to an additional 15,000 of our “citizen soldier” reservists annually after the overpass is built. More than 42,000 military and civilian personnel live on or are employed by the 65-square mile base.

The Defense Enhancement Coalition (DEC)—an organization comprised of community leaders and retired military leaders dedicated to working with and supporting our military neighbors—underscores the multifaceted benefit of this project, stating: “One of the virtues of the Joint Base is that it permits the Air Force, Army, Navy and Marine Corps to have open access to additional training areas. This project will greatly enhance the military value of the JBMDL by providing open and safe access to lands that are already part of the JBMDL.”

The CR 539 overpass project is an appropriate and prudent use of taxpayer dollars, helping both the local community and the military address long-endured traffic hazards for civilian roadway travelers and critical military exercises.

I appreciate the committee’s due consideration of this critical, highly-efficient and very much-needed project. Please feel free to reach out to me should you have any questions.

I certify that neither I nor my immediate family has any financial interest in this project.

Sincerely,



CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH
Member of Congress