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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

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COMMISSION

SENIOR MEMBER, HOUSE FOREIGN AFFAIRS
COMMITTEE

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May 9, 2024

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
H-307, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
H-307, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Steve Womack
Chairman
Subcommittee on Transportation,
Housing and Urban Development
and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
2358-A Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mike Quigley
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Transportation,
Housing and Urban Development,
and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
1036 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Cole, Ranking Member DeLauro, Chairman Womack, and Ranking Member Quigley,

I write to you today to request Community Project Funding in fiscal year 2025 to fund the *County Route 537 (CR 537) Corridor Improvements Section B Project*, along the Monmouth County and Ocean County border in my Congressional District (NJ-04).

The requested funding for this critical project is in the amount of \$2,500,000 to facilitate improvements that will include roadway widening, reconstruction, and drainage and safety improvements that are sorely needed on this heavily traveled roadway. The project improves safety and traffic flow along the CR 537 corridor where numerous new developments and projects are underway. CR 537 is a critical thoroughfare connecting I-195 and State Route 9, both heavily trafficked roadways. More than 20,000 vehicles use this passage daily, and it is considered a high accident corridor.

This project is an appropriate use of taxpayer funds as it is in keeping with the stated goals of the Surface Transportation Block Grant program to provide flexible funding to meet critical state and local transportation needs, and the funding of this capital project is needed to address volume and safety concerns in a fast-growing area. This program has a federal nexus because the funding provided is for purposes authorized by Chapter 23 USC 133(b).

In a letter included in this submission, Monmouth County Board of County Commissioner Director Thomas Arnone states “The Route 537 corridor is the primary access roadway for several large traffic generators including Six Flags Great Adventure and the Freehold Raceway Mall. Additionally, the corridor serves as a major east/west regional connection between I-195, US Route 9, NJ Route 18 and NJ Route 33.” Due to the high volume of traffic using a single lane in each direction, he said “recurring traffic congestion and frequent vehicle crashes” plague motorists.

Adding support to the project, the Ocean County Engineer stated they offer their “full support for Monmouth’s request,” further noting “The project is needed to mitigate traffic congestion and vehicle crashes through the corridor, as previously identified in the Western Monmouth Route 537 Corridor Study.”

The project would include the expansion of CR 537 provides an additional travel lane, shoulders, and medians to enhance safety and improve the flow of traffic in a fast-growing region. The Section B Project builds on previously enacted local and state transportation improvements and supports the stated goals of the New Jersey master transportation plan.

The New Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA) supports the proposal and has committed in writing to include it in the State Transportation Improvement Plan (STIP). NJTPA Executive Director David W. Behrend said: “The CR 537 Section B project is fully consistent with *Plan 2050: Transportation. People. Opportunity.*, the current long-range plan for the TPA region.” The Director adds “Given this project’s consistency with our long-range plan, the NJTPA would be able to add it to the TIP in a reasonable time frame should it receive federal funding.”

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

I appreciate the Committee’s due consideration of the proposal.

Sincerely,



CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH
Member of Congress