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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

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April 27, 2021

The Honorable Peter DeFazio
Chairman
Committee on Transportation &
Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives
2134 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Sam Graves
Ranking Member
Committee on Transportation &
Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives
1135 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman DeFazio and Ranking Member Graves:

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 project, which is my top transportation priority for submission and inclusion in the 2021 Surface Transportation Authorization legislation, 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 safety improvements for all vehicular traffic on the heavily traveled CR 539 and New Jersey Route 70—both of which serve as shore-point connectors to and from federal highways on the western side of New Jersey. The proposed bypass will also enhance access for mission-critical training maneuvers at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst (JB-MDL), America's only Army-Navy-Air Force installation.

Civilians would take the new overpass road on CR 539 while large 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 facility that are separated, basically cutoff, by the intervening highway.

The sponsor for this \$10,000,000 project is the government of Ocean County. The County, in conjunction and with the support of both the State of New Jersey and JB-MDL, has hosted many planning meetings and briefings—which I have attended—underscoring the need

for the project and their commitment to it. The County and State have long prepared to meet the 20 percent local sponsor match, now estimated at approximately \$2 million, with the remaining \$8 million being the federal share.

The North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA) which states that it will add this project to the NJTPA region's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), notes 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."^[1]

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."

It is important to note that the military strongly supports the project and is prepared to use its own funding for enhancements within the base perimeter so that it can make the best use of the at-level access point created by the new overpass. That access point will be located adjacent to the extremely active, recently-built Army Equipment Concentration Site (ECS), National Guard's Combined Logistics and Training Facility (CLTF), and Fort Dix range areas.

Specifically, the military will be able to use Sustainment, Restoration, and Modernization (SRM) funding to replace and realign existing pathways that the base, not the local government, internally maintains. These enhancements, predicated on the construction of the overpass, will replace a system of padlocked gates and dirt roads and provide the U.S. Army Reserve, the lead Army entity on JB-MDL, direct access to the full facility enabling it to protect and expand its vital national training mission—while improving public roadway safety for all travelers on the overpass.

As stated in the enclosed letter of support from Colonel Jon Brierton—the current Army Support Activity Fort Dix Commander and JB-MDL Deputy Commander— "the proposed overpass is in direct support of the Army's readiness mission to improve operational capability."^[2] The Army estimates it can train up to an additional 15,000 of our "citizen soldier" reservists annually after the overpass is built.

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 and states: "One of the virtues of the Joint Base is that it permits the Air Force, Army, Navy and Marine Corps to have open

[1]

https://chris-smith.house.gov/uploadedfiles/letter_of_support_from_north_jersey_transportation_planning_authority_to_rep_smith_nj-04_on_cr_539_over_pass_project.pdf

[2]

https://chris-smith.house.gov/uploadedfiles/letter_of_support_from_fort_dix_commander_col_brierton_to_rep_smith_nj-04_on_cr_539.pdf

access to additional training areas. This project will greatly enhance the military value of JBMDL by providing open and safe access to lands that are already part of the JBMDL.”^[3]

The CR 539 overpass project is an appropriate use of taxpayer dollars, helping the local community and the military address long-endured traffic hazards for civilian roadway travelers and critical military exercises at the only tri-service military base in the county.

I appreciate the committee’s due consideration of this critical, highly efficient and very much-needed project, and all Member Designated Projects submitted as part of the Surface Transportation Authorization legislation.

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

Sincerely,



CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH
Member of Congress

[3]

https://chrissmith.house.gov/uploadedfiles/letter_of_support_from_dec_for_the_county_road_539_overpass_to_rep._smith_nj-04.pdf