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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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March 29, 2023

The Honorable Kay Granger
Chairwoman
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 Tom Cole
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 Chair Granger, Ranking Member DeLauro, Chairman Cole, and Ranking Member Quigley:

I am writing today to request your consideration to fund the long-planned and very much needed **Western Boulevard Extension Project** in my congressional district. This project will provide congestion relief and a safe by-pass for U.S. Highway Route 9 in Berkeley NJ, whose Town Hall is located at 627 Pinewald Keswick Rd, Bayville, NJ 08721.

The extension of Western Boulevard is an appropriate use of taxpayer funds as it supports the goals of the Surface Transportation Block Grant Program, providing much-needed relief of significant traffic hazards and gridlock on Route 9 through additional avenues for the traveling public. This road extension will have a profound positive improvement on the quality of life for the residents of Berkeley (population approx. 43,800), but also the many neighboring shore towns of Beachwood Borough, Pine Beach Borough, and Lacey Township in Ocean County. This project has a Federal nexus because the funding provided is for purposes authorized by 23 U.S.C. 133.

The New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) has long recognized gridlock problems in the area and has pushed local towns to make plans to address it. The NJDOT specifically describes the Route 9 corridor in Ocean County in its NJDOT Future in Transportation (NJDOT-FIT) initiative as:

“a two-lane rural roadway which runs parallel to the Garden State Parkway and provides the only alternate north-south route in the county. Route 9 serves as an important connection among the various townships and boroughs along the Atlantic shore. Over the last 20 years, Route 9 has experienced rapid suburban development and tourism related pressures that have created tremendous traffic congestion and safety concerns along the corridor.”

It will also be essential to the planned Berkeley Town Center One (TC1) to foster needed redevelopment and revitalization, which is favorably cited in the NJDOT-FIT. The TC1 redevelopment plans will include a mixed use of commercial, professional, retail, and residential development to revitalize vacant or under-used properties, such as the former Beachwood Mall and the former SBA Asphalt Plant.

The Western Boulevard Extension has always been and remains a key component to relieve the current traffic conditions and accommodate the future of the Berkeley TC1. Berkeley’s engineer has estimated engineering design and update to its 2014 study, at an estimated cost of **\$1,179,164.80**.

In 2012, the State approved the township’s petition for Plan Endorsement and the Town Centers One and Two. Plan Endorsement and Town Center approvals *require the township to pursue the Western Boulevard Extension*. This road extension is also a significant part of the Planning and Implementation Agreement (PIA) with the State.

The cost estimate for Berkeley’s Western Boulevard project is included with this submission, as is a map clearly showing the straightforward benefit of how this by-pass will be a reliever for heavily over-traveled Route 9. Additionally, the Mayor’s letter details the \$1,179,164 request for work planned for FY2024. The town is prepared to match up to 20 percent of the funding, if needed.

It is my belief that Federal funding on this project will truly be well spent, and a significant, cost-effective boost for the Township’s, County’s and State’s joint vision to improve regional traffic and promote much-needed redevelopment and revitalization efforts.

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