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April 23, 2021

The Honorable Christopher H. Smith
Congressman, 4th District
405 Route 539
Cream Ridge, NJ 08514

(Emailed and mailed)

Dear Congressman Smith:

We are writing, on behalf of the Board, in support of the Ocean County Route 539 Overpass Project for inclusion into the 2021 Surface Transportation Authorization Legislation.

Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst (JBMDL) is the only tri-service military base in the United States that includes active installations of the Air Force, Army, and Navy. As you may be aware, County Route 539 divides the base from north to south and separates the Lakehurst and Fort Dix installations.

Route 539 presents conflicts between military and civilian traffic, particularly in the summer months when the road is heavily used to access shore destinations. Larger military convoys have difficulties crossing Route 539 and instead divert onto State Highway 70 where additional conflicts occur. Additionally, on the east side of Route 539, the NJ National Guard maintains an Equipment Concentration Site and Consolidated Logistics & Training Facility (ECS). There are hundreds of vehicles that regularly access the facility and generate additional traffic during certain times of the year.

In 2016, JBMDL commissioned a study to evaluate crossing alternatives to enhance accessibility to the training areas east of Route 539. The "County Route 539 Traffic Study" was completed in March 2017. The safest and most efficient alternative identified is the construction of a grade separated crossing (overpass) on Route 539.

The Honorable Christopher H. Smith
Page 2
April 23, 2021

Most importantly, the overpass project will immediately and significantly improve the safety of County Route 539. This overpass will allow paved roadways to connect the eastern and western portions of the 65-square mile base. This will keep military vehicles off both Route 539 and State Highway Route 70. The civilian traffic would overpass the military traffic allowing for large military equipment to cross within the Base boundary.

Additionally, the overpass project would greatly benefit the federal missions of JBMDL. This connection would facilitate the current federal missions and allow greater access and flexibility for future missions by creating the direct link between the Air Force (McGuire AFB), Army, (Fort Dix), and Navy (Lakehurst NAES) areas of operation spanning Burlington and Ocean Counties. The overpass will allow the Army to expand and protect its vital national mission at its largest site that trains troops of both the Army Reserves and the Army National Guard.

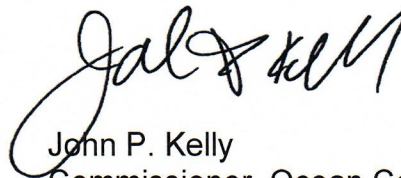
The local sponsor will be Ocean County. The estimated cost of the Route 539 Overpass project is \$10 million. We are prepared to meet the 20 percent local match with the additional support from the State of New Jersey and Burlington County, and we have the ability for the funding to be obligated within the time period set forth under Federal Aid Highway or Federal Transit requirements.

Should you have any questions regarding this valuable project, please do not hesitate to contact our office.

Respectfully,



Gary Quinn
Director, Ocean County



John P. Kelly
Commissioner, Ocean County

GQ/JPK/dag

C: Members, Board of Commissioners
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