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February 2, 2026

The Honorable Sean Duffy
Secretary, United States Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

RE: Kern support for BUILD funding application to improve Route 58 connecting corridor

Dear Secretary Duffy,

I am writing on behalf of the Kern County Board of Supervisors to express our strong support for the Kern Council of Governments' (Kern COG) application for the 2026 Federal Highway Administration BUILD discretionary grant to create *the I-40 Extension from I-15 to I-5 Corridor Plan* for State Route 58, extending from Interstate 5 west of Bakersfield to the I-15/I-40 connections in Barstow. The requested BUILD planning funds will support evaluation of this multimodal freight corridor, including connecting highways, the BNSF and Union Pacific Class I rail corridor, and planned and under-construction inland ports.

Route 58 is a nationally significant freight corridor and the primary east-west connection linking Interstates 40, 15, and 5, supporting goods movement between the Midwest/East Coast and Central and Northern California. Its designation on the Strategic Highway Network (STRAHNET) underscores its importance to defense and supply chain reliability.

The corridor carries more than 21,000 vehicles daily, with heavy trucks comprising up to 37% of traffic, resulting in increasing congestion, safety concerns, and infrastructure wear. These conditions are expected to intensify with planned inland port intermodal rail facilities, which will increase last-mile truck activity. This planning effort will improve freight mobility and safety in Kern and Southern California promoting more efficient rail shipments in a "Greenpass" freight corridor to via Route 58, U.S. 395 and other connecting routes.

BUILD funding will enable Kern COG to evaluate future investments that enhance freight efficiency, improve safety, and support regional economic growth. We appreciate consideration of Kern COG's application for the 2026 BUILD planning-only grant.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Phillip Peters", with a stylized, flowing script.

Phillip Peters, Chairman
Kern County Board of Supervisors

cc: Honorable Members, Kern Congressional Delegation
Kern Council of Governments
Kern County Public Works Department
Townsend Public Affairs