

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 25, 2015

The Honorable Anthony Foxx
Secretary
Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Foxx:

We are pleased to support the TIGER VII grant application for the State Route 347 Grade Separation Project in Maricopa, Arizona.

As you know, Maricopa is a small but thriving community 35 miles south of Phoenix. Incorporated in 2003 with a population of approximately 1,000 people, Maricopa is now a burgeoning community of over 46,000 and growing at the rate of approximately 50 people per month. SR-347 is Maricopa's "Main Street" and is the area's primary north-south corridor and most direct route to the Phoenix area. Originally paved in the 1950's as a two-lane highway, the roadway was upgraded to a four-lane facility in the early 1990's, when the population of Maricopa and surrounding communities in Pinal County was less than 1,000 people. The Union Pacific Rail Road's (UPRR) Sunset Line crosses SR-347 in the center of the Maricopa community. The Sunset Line is double tracked with plans for a third track in the very near future. The Sunset Line is one of UPRR's key trans-continental freight corridors, and currently over 60 trains per day pass through the UPRR/SR-347 intersection at speeds in excess of 50 mph.

According to traffic counts taken in September 2012, approximately **34,000** vehicles, including 240 school buses carrying an estimated **2,856** children cross this rail line during morning and afternoon peak hour periods. Also, on average 30 pedestrians cross the tracks at peak times, many of them students walking to and from Maricopa High and Maricopa Wells Middle Schools. Additionally, a majority of patrons of Harrah's Ak-Chin Casino, located just a few miles south of Maricopa, cross the UPRR line on SR-347 in both personal vehicles and on charter buses.

The Federal Railroad Administration's (FRA) most recent ten-year accident statistics for all of Pinal County show an average of three fatalities a year out of 30 incidents per year countywide. In Maricopa, crash statistics show SR-347 at the UPRR Line had 21 accidents including one motorcycle fatality which occurred in February 2013. FRA statistics show six fatalities in the past 20 years at crossing **741343C** (SR-347 & UPRR) including a toddler trapped in a truck stalled on the crossing in June 2000. Life-long residents remember this tragedy and never want to see it repeated.

Besides the congestion and traffic nightmares, the crossing presents problems for emergency and hazardous materials vehicles that must often sit and wait for trains to pass or worse, stall traffic for more than 20 minutes as AMTRAK load and unload passengers at the station next to the crossing.

It is also important to note the City of Maricopa has planned for \$9.6 million over the next two fiscal years in the Capital Improvement Plan. Additionally, the Gila River Indian Community (GRIC) that abuts the City's northern boundary has awarded \$300,000 to the project. ADOT and the City of Maricopa have each committed \$500,000 towards the Design Concept Report (DCR) and the Environmental Assessment (EA) that was recently completed resulting in a Finding Of No Significant Impact (FONSI). Last June, ADOT committed \$18.8 million in funding through the Arizona State Transportation Board Five-Year Plan. The Ak-Chin Indian Community, to the south of the grade separation, has publically stated support for this project and their intentions to participate as a funding partner. Finally, this project has been placed on the Maricopa Association of Government's (MAGs) Five-Year Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) for \$35 million. The Arizona Department of Transportation believes this is a project of such critical importance that they have requested to be the Primary Applicant for the TIGER grant request.

In conclusion, the UPRR crossing at SR-347 is one of the most dangerous rail crossings in Arizona. The crossing bisects the fastest growing area of Arizona, traffic is congested, public safety is compromised, and children are at risk because the volume of bus traffic and proximity to schools. The only way to resolve this dangerous situation is an over pass at the current grade crossing.

On behalf of all citizens of our state, we would like to thank you for your time and careful consideration of the City of Maricopa's request. As always, we ask this matter is handled in strict accordance with all agency, rules, regulations and ethical guidelines. Please do not hesitate to contact our offices with questions, or if we can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,



TRENT FRANKS
Member of Congress



MATT SALMON
Member of Congress



RAUL GRIJALVA
Member of Congress



ANN KIRKPATRICK
Member of Congress



PAUL GOSAR
Member of Congress



DAVID SCHWEIKERT
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