



February 19, 2024

Secretary Pete Buttigieg
United States Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

Please accept this letter of support on behalf of Pinellas County Government for consideration of the Beckett Bridge project to be selected for funding through the U.S. Department of Transportation for the 2023 Bridge Investment Program. The project consists of replacing the existing bridge with a new low-level bascule bridge on the same alignment as the existing bridge. Beckett Bridge connects areas west and north of the Whitcomb Bayou to downtown Tarpon Springs and provides access to major north/south arterials including Alternate US 19 and US 19 for coastal residents during hurricane evacuation. The bridge also provides access for emergency vehicles, including police ambulance and fire.

The existing bridge has reduced capacity due to ongoing deterioration and is classified as structurally deficient and functionally obsolete. The bridge is currently posted for legal loads limited to 12-ton Single Unit trucks and 15-ton Combination trucks. Recent reevaluation of the bridge condition resulted in the National Bridge Inventory (NBI) substructure rating of 4 (poor condition) on a scale from 0 to 9 and Sufficiency Rating of 18.1 on a scale of 0-100.

The proposed new bridge will meet all current safety standards and provide enhanced bicycle and pedestrian facilities. The need for frequent repairs will be eliminated.

Located on the Gulf Coast of Florida, Pinellas County is home to nearly one million residents, with an additional 15.5 million visitors each year, including seasonal residents and tourists. The County values the significance the City of Tarpon Springs brings to the community, both economically and as a favorite destination for citizens and visitors to enjoy natural Florida.

Pinellas County government confidently supports investing in the longevity of the Beckett Bridge. The project directly aligns with the County's Strategic Plan goal to *Foster Continual Economic Growth and Vitality* by investing in infrastructure to meet current and future needs, and in doing so, providing safe and efficient transportation systems to support the efficient flow of motorists, commerce, and regional connectivity.

Sincerely,

Kathleen Peters
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