



Appendix D: Letters of Support



FORWARD PINELLAS

P: (727) 464.8250

F: (727) 464.8212

forwardpinellas.org

310 Court Street

Clearwater, FL 33756



March 8, 2024

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

RE: Pinellas County Beckett Bridge Funding – Bridge Investment Program

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

On behalf of Forward Pinellas, the metropolitan planning organization (MPO) for Pinellas County, I am supporting Pinellas County Government's request for U.S. Department of Transportation funding for the Beckett Bridge project through the 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 arterial roads, 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. A 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 a 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, which are currently lacking. 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. Forward Pinellas has been working closely with the City of Tarpon Springs and Pinellas County to develop a multimodal transportation network that supports the community's redevelopment and mobility goals. The Beckett Bridge is a key connector in the community, and its current lack of facilities is a barrier to accessibility, economic opportunity, and safety.

Forward Pinellas clearly recognizes the need for improvements to the Beckett Bridge for those reasons. The project is consistent with our policy emphasis of Enhancing Beach Community Access, which is one of three major emphasis areas adopted by the Forward Pinellas Board in 2015 and reaffirmed in 2021, and is a pillar of the adopted 2045 Long Range Transportation Plan. Thank you for your consideration of this letter of support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Whit Blanton', is written over a light blue rectangular background.

Whit Blanton, FAICP
Executive Director



City of Tarpon Springs, Florida

324 EAST PINE STREET
POST OFFICE BOX 5004
TARPON SPRINGS, FLORIDA 34688-5004
(727) 938-3711
FAX (727) 937-8199

OFFICE OF
CITY MANAGER

February 15, 2024

Secretary Pete Buttigieg
United States Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, S.E.
Washington, DC 20590

RE: Letter of Support
Beckett Bridge Project Application - Bridge Investment Program

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

Please accept this letter in 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 Bridge Investment Program. The project consists of replacing the existing structurally deficient and functionally obsolete bridge with a new low-level bascule bridge on the same alignment as the existing bridge as well as major utility relocations required to accommodate the new bridge. 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.

The City of Tarpon Springs and Pinellas County have worked together since 2013 on the preliminary research for Beckett Bridge replacement project and the City has provided the design plans for relocation of existing utilities that currently share the right of way.

Beckett Bridge connects areas west and north of the Whitcomb Bayou to downtown Tarpon Springs and provides access to major north/south arterials including Alternative US 19 and US 19 for coastal residents during hurricane evacuation. The bridge also provides access for emergency vehicles, including police, ambulance, and fire.

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. City of Tarpon Springs has a total area of almost 18 square miles with over 25,000 residents. The County values the significance the City brings to the community, both economically and as a favorite destination for citizens and visitors to enjoy natural Florida.

If selected for this grant, the City of Tarpon Springs is committed to our involvement and making the project a success.

Respectfully,

Mark G. LeCouris
City Manager