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April 25, 2022

The Honorable David E. Price
Chairman
U.S. House of Representatives
Subcommittee on Transportation, and
Housing and Urban Development

The Honorable Mario Diaz-Balart
Ranking Member
U.S. House of Representatives
Subcommittee on Transportation, and
Housing and Urban Development

Dear Chair Price and Ranking Member Diaz-Balart,

I am requesting \$1,016,458 under the Department of Transportation (DOT) Highway Infrastructure Projects for the Tohono O’odham Nation for the construction of two turn lanes (both south and north bound) at the Baboquivari High School South Driveway, to address safety concerns created by increased traffic volumes and speeding in the area in fiscal year 2023.

The funding will be used for the construction of two turning lanes (both south and north bound) that would separate turning movements from through traffic and would provide operational and safety benefits for school buses, teachers, students and other drivers attempting to turn into Baboquivari High School, as well as those driving past the school, especially during busy school opening and closing times.

The Tohono O’odham Nation (“Nation”) Reservation encompasses about 2.8 million acres and includes over 734 miles of BIA roads, including BIA Route 19, located east of the Nation’s Baboquivari High School that serves children from ten of the Nation’s eleven Districts. Funds to construct two turn lanes are needed because the BIA tribal transportation program has been chronically underfunded for years, with a current (FY 2022) estimated BIA maintenance backlog in excess of \$300 million and annual appropriations and additional funding in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law remaining inadequate to maintain and ensure the safety of BIA roads on the Nation’s Reservation (and throughout Indian Country). This project is a high priority for the Nation, as it will substantially reduce the danger for motorists, including school buses, students and teachers, resulting from potential collisions with vehicles turning into the school. During the initial work performed for a Road Safety Assessment for BIA Route 19, concerns about speeding were expressed and speeders were observed during field observations between mile posts 19 and 20 where Baboquivari High School is located.

The Nation is currently in the planning and evaluation stage for this project, and it has expended staff time and resources for the preliminary work, including initial work underway for the BIA Route 19 Road Safety Assessment. This project has not previously received federal funds. The total cost of the project is \$1,016,458 and the Nation could obligate all appropriated funds within

12 months after enactment. The funding will be used for planning, evaluation, and construction costs, which would fully fund the project. Upon receipt of funding, the Nation could complete the project within 12-18 months. Because this project is within the existing BIA right-of-way, it would be subject to a categorical exclusion under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

The Baboquivari High School Turning Lane Project on BIA Route 19 is one of the roads projects on the Tohono O'odham Reservation being added to the Tribal Transportation Improvement Plan (TTIP) for Fiscal Years 2022-2026. The updated TTIP has been reviewed and approved during a special session of the Tohono O'odham Nation's Legislative Council (TOLC) held on April 21, 2022, TOLC Resolution No. 22-155. The updated TTIP, includes the Baboquivari Turning Lanes project, will be incorporated into the BIA TTIP in the near future.

This is a capital project, including project-specific planning and design, that clearly falls within the eligibility requirements of 23 U.S.C. § 133(b)(1)(a) and (b)(5), as a project that includes planning and "construction of highways" and "highway safety infrastructure." More important, it is a project that will greatly enhance safety for the Nation's members and other drivers using BIA Route 19.

Community partners in this project include the Nation's Legislative Council, Department of Public Safety, Planning and Economic Development Department, Education Department, Baboquivari Unified School District #40, the Nation's Baboquivari District, Chukut Kuk District, Gu Achi District, Gu Vo District, Hikiwan District, Pisinemo District, San Lucy District, San Xavier District, Schuk Toak District, Sells District and Sif Oidak District.

This project is a good use of taxpayer money because it would provide significant operational and safety benefits for school buses, teachers, students and other drivers attempting to turn into the Nation's Baboquivari High School, as well as other motorists driving past the school on BIA Route 19, especially during busy school opening and closing times. Initial observations from a Road Safety Assessment of BIA Route 19 observed speeding above posted limits between mile posts 19 and 20 in front of Baboquivari High School, and the speeding concerns are compounded by increased traffic volume, especially during the half hour in the morning and again in the afternoon when school begins and ends for the day. This project would allow the Nation to construct two turn lanes (right and left) at the School's South Driveway, which would substantially reduce the danger for all motorists traveling along BIA Route 19 in this area, including school buses, students and teachers, resulting from potential collisions with vehicles turning into the school. The safety benefits provided by this project otherwise will be delayed for years, subjecting the Nation's children, teachers, and other motorists to unnecessary safety risks.

I appreciate your time and consideration of this important project.
Sincerely,



Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress