

United States Senate  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 24, 2019

The Honorable Elaine Chao  
Secretary  
United States Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Ave SE  
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Secretary Chao:

We write today in support of the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) Infrastructure of Rebuilding America (INFRA) grant application for Interstate 81 (I-81).

VDOT submitted their proposal, *Interstate 81: Delivering Reliability for Our Freight and Families*, in March of this year. The proposal is a comprehensive grouping of projects throughout the 325-mile I-81 corridor in the Commonwealth of Virginia, developed through a data-driven, merit-based process. The grant would support operational and safety improvements that are integral to the entire corridor's functionality and efficiency.

I-81 is not only critical to Virginia's economy and transportation network, it also plays an important role in the commerce and movement of goods and travelers along the East Coast. More than one-third of all trucks that drive through Virginia and approximately half of the Commonwealth's value of goods are transported along I-81. In the last decade, I-81 has also experienced traffic growth, and travel is anticipated to only increase along the interstate, with truck traffic growing at a faster pace than automobile traffic.<sup>1</sup> Due to the busy nature of the corridor, more than 2,000 crashes occur annually along the route, creating travel delays and safety hazards. While improvements have been made in past years to keep up with the growth, I-81 continues to experience heavy congestion and dangerous conditions, which have degraded the corridor.

VDOT recently conducted a study, and found a remaining need of about \$4 billion dollars in funding to address the improvements along the interstate. This year, the Virginia General Assembly approved a bipartisan plan that includes higher truck registration fees and gas tax increases, which would raise about \$2.2 billion in revenue for upgrades to I-81. While this is a significant investment, there is a funding gap between money generated through the

---

<sup>1</sup> "Interstate 81: Delivering Reliability for Our Freight and Families," Virginia Department of Transportation. (March 4, 2019), available at: <file:///C:/Users/cl48651/AppData/Local/Microsoft/Windows/INetCache/Content.Outlook/KRMQEXZI/Virginia%202019%20INFRA%20Grant%20Application.pdf>.

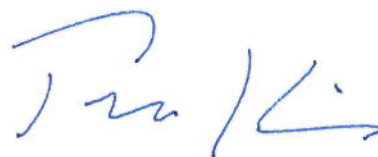
Commonwealth's funding mechanism and what is needed to adequately fix the corridor. Due to the importance of this corridor throughout the east coast, federal funding is crucial to help address this deficit.

The proposal put forth by VDOT will undoubtedly transform and improve the lives of many Virginians who travel the interstate every day. Furthermore, upgrades and repairs will improve the safety of those traveling through the Commonwealth. We urge that you give strong consideration to the funding application submitted by VDOT.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Mark R. Warner in blue ink.

MARK R. WARNER  
United States Senator

Handwritten signature of Tim Kaine in blue ink.

TIM Kaine  
United States Senator