

May 5, 2009

The Honorable Mike Coffman
U.S. House of Representatives
Congressional 6th District of Colorado
1508 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

**RE: Letter of Support for the US 85 / State Highway 470 Interchange Reconstruction –
Request as a High Priority Project**

Dear Congressman Coffman:

On behalf of Douglas County, I write to respectfully request your support and assistance in securing **\$13,800,000 in federal funding** for the Santa Fe Drive (US 85) and State Highway 470 (C-470) Interchange Reconstruction Project. An additional **\$17,250,000 (\$13,800,000 federal funds and \$3,450,000 in local match)** is needed in order to complete construction of Phase I, which includes constructing a new Southbound US 85 to Eastbound C-470 Flyover Ramp over County Line Road, over US 85, over C-470, over the BNSF and Union Pacific Railroads, over Erickson Boulevard, over the High Line Canal, over the C-470 Multi-Use Trail and under the proposed future Regional Transportation District's (RTD) Southwest Light Rail Extension.

This project is eligible under Title 23 (Highways) for federal funding. Both US 85 and C-470 are part of the National Highway System. The Environmental Assessment (EA) for the C-470 Corridor, which included reconstructing this interchange, was approved by the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) and Federal Highways Administration (FHWA) in February 2006. This project is included in the current State Transportation Improvement Plan (STIP) and has received previous congressionally designated funds. CDOT has reviewed this application and determined the project is in the 2035 Fiscally Constrained Transportation Plan. In September 2008, FHWA approved the Compelling Argument, prepared by CDOT, which allows for Phase I improvements to be constructed in advance of the other C-470 Corridor and interchange improvements. The Construction Documents for Phase I will be completed and the project will be ready to advertise/bid by January 1, 2010. The Phase I improvements will provide immediate relief at this significantly congested interchange.

This is a critical highway/interchange reconstruction project that will benefit many constituents throughout the Denver Metro Area. Douglas County has been one of the fastest growing counties in the State and among the fastest growing in the nation for many years, and Douglas County constituents account for approximately twenty percent (15 to 20%) of the traffic that utilizes this congested interchange. The proposed improvements will improve access to the existing RTD Light Rail Station located at US 85 and Mineral Avenue (less than a mile to the north of the interchange). As you know, US 85 and C-470 are both significant regional transportation corridors that provide mobility to the Denver metropolitan area and surrounding communities; and are vital components

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for sustaining economic growth. Numerous commercial, industrial and residential commuters rely on these corridors; and the current and increasing congestion warrants making safety, operational and capacity improvements to this substandard interchange immediately. US 85 is a major north-south regional arterial that links the growing populations of Castle Rock and Highlands Ranch to employment, commercial and industrial centers in Denver and suburbs, including Englewood, Littleton, Centennial, and other communities in Douglas, Jefferson and Arapahoe Counties.

US 85 serves as the only major, viable north-south highway connecting Denver and Castle Rock should I-25 become unavailable, and it is invaluable for defense purposes. C-470 is equally important, and serves as the only east-west regional loop around the southwest portion of the Metro Denver area and provides vital access to I-70 and I-25 for interstate commerce and tourism. Once Phase I construction is completed, the reconfigured interchange will greatly improve traffic flow on both US 85 and C-470. The problems created by this overtaxed interchange ripple throughout the region. The solution to this transportation mobility issue will require the coordination of and financial investment by all levels of government.

The total estimated cost to completely reconstruct this interchange is \$50,000,000. The total budget needed to complete Phase I is approximately \$25,000,000 (which includes previous expenditures spent on completing the EA, and initiating the design and right-of-way phase). **The construction cost to complete Phase I is estimated at \$21,800,000; and \$4,550,000 is presently available for construction. Therefore, an additional \$17,250,000 is needed to complete Phase I construction. We are requesting 80% in additional federal funds (\$13,800,000) and Douglas County is responsible for providing \$3,450,000, (the 20% Required Local Match).** Presently Douglas County has already committed \$3,500,000 (including overmatch funds) and estimates our total contribution for this project to be \$5,000,000. Currently, CDOT has allocated \$232,000 State funds for this project.

We respectfully request consideration for an additional **\$13,800,000 in federal funds in fiscal year 2010 or 2011, for Phase I of the US 85/C-470 Interchange Reconstruction Project**, from the new transportation authorization legislation that will replace the SAFETEA-LU, and expires on September 30, 2009. **This essential interchange reconstruction project is supported by Douglas County, Arapahoe County, Jefferson County, the Colorado Department of Transportation, and the Southeast Business Partnership, (SEBP).** In addition to this letter of support/funding request from Douglas County, we have confirmed that Arapahoe County, Jefferson County, CDOT and SEBP sent your office separate letters of support for the US 85 / C-470 Interchange Reconstruction as a High Priority Project. We value your support and we look forward to working with you more directly on this and other regional issues.

Sincerely,



Jack A. Hilbert, Chair
Board of County Commissioners