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COUNTY OF MENDOCINO
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
501 Low Gap Road • Room 1010
Ukiah, California 95482

July 13, 2021

The Honorable Jared Huffman
1527 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

200 South School Street
Ukiah, CA 95482

Re: Support for Reauthorization of Federal Spending Through the Highway Trust Fund – entitled the Investing in a New Vision for the Environment and Surface Transportation in America (INVEST in America) Act - with Restoration of the Highway Bridge Program Full Funding

Dear Representative Huffman:

On behalf of Mendocino County, I'm writing to request that you make the restoration of the Highway Bridge Program (HBP) a top priority for the upcoming surface transportation reauthorization of federal spending through the Highway Trust Fund (HTF) which expires on September 30, 2021. Reauthorization through the INVEST in America Act and reinstating the HBP as a core Federal-aid Highway program would help ensure that states and local governments have additional, dedicated funding to repair and replace deficient bridges.

Bridges are a unique and vital component of our nation's transportation system. Unlike most road and pavement projects, bridge projects entail complex design processes; necessitate long-term planning and procurement, and present unique construction challenges. Moreover, there is little room for error when it comes to bridge safety, as they must remain structurally sound in order to ensure vehicle and motorists' safety. When a bridge fails, the results are often catastrophic.

According to the American Road and Transportation Builders Association, seven percent of the bridges in California are classified as structurally deficient. All told, the state has identified needed repairs on 2,006 bridges at an estimated cost of \$8.8 billion.

In Mendocino County, eleven local bridges are currently in line for replacement — representing \$47.7 million worth of projects with partial funding from the HBP:

- 1) Eureka Hill Road Garcia Bridge-\$1,654,819
- 2) Ackerman Creek Bridge, North State Street-\$11,437,500
- 3) Mill Creek Bridge, Hill Road-\$1,520,938
- 4) Mattole River, Briceland Road-\$1,453,443
- 5) Dutch Charlie Creek Bridge, Wilderness Lodge Road-\$1,615,213

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- 6) Rancheria Creek Bridge, Lambert Lane-\$2,740,452
- 7) Usal Creek Bridge, Usal Road-\$4,501,700
- 8) Navarro River Bridge, Philo-Greenwood Road-\$11,468,351
- 9) Outlet Creek Bridge, Reynolds Highway-\$4,412,754
- 10) Eel River Bridge, Hearst Willits Road-\$6,794,000
- 11) Camp 1 Ten Mile River Road Tributary Bridge-\$1,723,000

Additional Local Bridge Funds would enable these eleven bridge replacements to happen much more quickly and enhance public safety.

It should be noted that the previous Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act provided a funding set-aside for locally owned bridges that are located off of the Federal-aid highway system; however, there is no dedicated funding stream for local "on-system" bridges. As a result, many local on-system bridges that are in need of repair or replacement do not receive *any* federal support, as they must compete with a host of other highway and transit projects for limited funds. Reestablishing the HBP would ensure that all locally owned bridges — both on- and off-system — would have access to additional, dedicated federal funding.

Finally, as you may be aware, bipartisan legislation that was introduced in the House earlier this year includes provisions that would reinstate the HBP as a core Federal-aid highway program. The bill (HR 1299) would increase the federal cost share for eligible bridge projects to 90 percent up from the typical 80 percent federal contribution.

Again, we urge you to make restoration of the HBP a top priority for *FAST Act* reauthorization. Thank you for your attention to this request and please feel free to reach out to Howard Dashiell, Mendocino County Engineer, at (707) 463-4363, if you have any questions or if you need any additional information.

Sincerely,

DANIEL GJERDE, Chair
Mendocino County Board of Supervisors

cc: Graham Knaus, Executive Director, California State Association of Counties (CSAC)
Howard N. Dashiell, Mendocino County Department of Transportation
Paul Yoder, Partner, Shaw Yoder Antwih, Schmelzer & Lange (SYASL)