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August 8, 2021

Honorable Pete Buttigieg
Secretary of Transportation
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, D.C. 20590

Stephanie Pollack
Acting Administrator
Federal Highway Administration
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg and Acting Administrator Pollack:

Thank you for the U.S. Department of Transportation's (USDOT) offer to support the state of Colorado's response to the 2021 Glenwood Canyon mudslides and debris flow that have led to an extended closure of Interstate 70 (I-70).

The Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) has submitted a letter of intent to the Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) Colorado division office to seek assistance through the FHWA emergency relief program. Attached to this letter is the formal request made by CDOT's Chief Engineer to the FHWA Colorado Division Administrator today. This follows issuance of two Executive Orders from Governor Polis on Friday, August 6, 2021 as well as a letter from the full Colorado Congressional Delegation on Saturday, August 7, 2021 stressing the urgency of this matter to the state.

Our total initial request to the FHWA Emergency Relief (ER) program, subject to ongoing assessment of damages, recovery, and resiliency needs that will supplement and refine initial estimates, totals \$116 million. We are requesting quick approval and release of ER funding for this disaster to allow us to proceed expeditiously with emergency repairs to federal-aid highways. At this time, we request expeditious release of \$11.6 million (10% of current estimate) for these emergency repairs, and CDOT will request additional allocations as damage survey teams inventory damage. We appreciate all of FHWA's advice and ongoing technical assistance in the preparation of these documents.

Beginning June 26, 2021 and continuing through August 3, 2021, there have been at least 19 separate debris flow events in Glenwood Canyon. On July 29, 2021, the Blue Gulch drainage ran for the first time and I-70 experienced its first significant structural damage due to debris flows. As described in the attached package, the damage that ensued between July 29-July 31, compounded by significant rainfall in the subsequent days, caused severe damage in this area of Glenwood Canyon— specifically at two spots near the Blue Gulch drainage area.

For example, visible damage on the westbound side includes but is not limited to loss of barrier and rail structures, culvert damage, breakage to the post tensioned slab overhang that secured the perimeter of the upper deck and severe scouring of the polyester concrete driving surface. Notably, much of this surface was installed just last year and the material was selected for its ability to withstand severe weather events more than other paving materials, yet the force of these monsoons and debris flows in the fire-damaged areas leaves it severely damaged nonetheless.

Eastbound I-70 is completely demolished at the Blue Gulch drainage for an approximate length of 100 linear feet. Sections of retaining wall, concrete pavement, and steel reinforcement were found dispersed throughout

the debris deposited within the Colorado River. The interstate median barrier was destroyed and distributed downstream by the event and the interstate roadway cross section will need to be completely reconstructed within this section.

These are just some examples of the impacts that are documented in our initial attached damage assessment report, recognizing that evaluations of both damage, recovery needs, and resiliency needs will continue in the days and weeks ahead. Meanwhile, our team continues immediate cleanup operations with the goal concurrently restoring traffic to an interim configuration and initiating more permanent repairs.

At the same time, our request also recognizes that long term recovery in this area will require significant attention to climate resiliency. The intensity and variability of extreme weather events that this fragile ecosystem continues to experience will demand continued measures to stabilize the surrounding areas — many of which are public lands under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Forest Service — as well as continued geohazard mitigation, following extensive efforts of this nature supported by FHWA and CDOT after the fire last year. Unfortunately, these interventions tend to be costly and ongoing as the surrounding environment continues to evolve.

Further, the ongoing vulnerability due to the severe erosion described above will likely require improvements to diversion routes such as Cottonwood Pass to be able to withstand heavier traffic in the future while providing resiliency. Prior estimates concluded that improvements to Cottonwood Pass are upwards of \$50 million of which has been carried forward in the estimates below, subject to further assessment which could increase this number.

While it is likely that this number in particular will evolve as we refine our estimates, we believe it is critical, from the outset of this process, to include this initial resiliency cost estimate and stress the importance of improving the safety of key alternate routes that are needed for the movement of people, goods, emergency operations, and the vitality of the supply chain within and through Colorado and the entirety of the intermountain west.

The ongoing closure of I-70 continues to strain people and communities throughout the region and western Colorado, and also has significant implications for interstate travel and commerce. The corridor is vital for everything from long haul freight to movement of agricultural products across the state to the ecotourism economy. I-70 provides critical connectivity for communities in Eagle, Garfield, and Pitkin counties and serves as the state's main east-west thoroughfare for people and commerce. While Coloradans understand the magnitude of destruction, the disruption to people's lives and livelihoods grows as the interstate remains closed. Federal support, including quick release of funds, will greatly assist our efforts to restore functionality to the interstate and allow people to have the connectivity they rely on.

Thank you for your attention and ongoing support to the citizens of Colorado as well as to our team at CDOT.

Sincerely,



Jared Polis
Governor
State of Colorado



Shoshana M. Lew
Executive Director
Colorado Department of Transportation