



Board of County Commissioners

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December 18, 2020

The Honorable Peter Gaynor
Administrator
Federal Emergency Management Agency
500 C Street, SW.
Washington, DC 20472

Lee dePalo
Regional Administrator
FEMA Region 8
Denver Federal Center, Building 710, Box 25267
Denver, CO 80225

RE: FEMA BRIC grant application for the Eisenhower Johnson Memorial Tunnels Generator

Dear Mr. Gaynor and Mr. dePalo:

On behalf of Eagle County, I am writing to express support for the Colorado Department of Transportation's (CDOT) Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) proposal to replace the aged generators in the Eisenhower Johnson Memorial Tunnels (EJMT). The Eisenhower Johnson Memorial Tunnels (EJMT), about 60 miles west of Denver on Interstate 70 (I-70), are the highest paved vehicular tunnels in the world—at an elevation of 11,013 feet at the East Portal and 11,158 feet at the West Portal. The Tunnel traverses through the Continental Divide at an average elevation of 11,112 feet. The tunnels are just over 1.5 miles long and at peak travel times carry over 5,000 vehicles an hour from one side to the other. Interstate 70 is a critical corridor for Colorado's economy, moving goods and services and as such, the tunnels are a vital piece of I-70 infrastructure..

The EJMT's current generators are original equipment from when the tunnels were built in the 1970s. This project is necessary to reduce the vulnerabilities and increase the resiliency of the tunnels during power outages, which occur frequently in this mountainous terrain. The tunnels' two current natural gas-powered generators are only able to power every seventh light and one of 28 fans on intermediate mode. With a new diesel or dual fuel source generator, the EJMT would be much better equipped to provide power during a power outage. A new generator would allow CDOT to continue normal operations during power outages, making emergency response exponentially safer and maintaining economic integrity.

Based on historic and projected population and employment levels, both passenger and freight traffic volumes will continue to increase and impact I-70. The replacement of the generators in the EJMT is a vital step to keep the tunnels operating during power outages and/or emergencies that result from power outages. A new, more reliable generator is a necessary step in fortifying a fluid transportation system along the I-70 corridor. When the EJMT is not open, the detour over Loveland Pass (US 6) can be treacherous and adds an additional 45 minutes,



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on dry pavement, to travel time. If both Loveland Pass and the tunnels are closed, the detour is 90 minutes, on dry pavement, and can be much longer during winter conditions.

Our community lies along the I-70 mountain corridor and depends on the EJMT for the movement of freight, to facilitate tourism and recreation, and to access natural resources for our economic livelihood.

We whole-heartedly support this project and request FEMA to prioritize BRIC grant funding for this worthy proposal.

Sincerely,

Kathy Chandler-Henry
Chair

Matt Scherr
Commissioner

Jeanne McQueeney
Commissioner

Cc: Mark Rogers, CDOT, R3 Planning Manager