

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 2, 2015

The Honorable Malcolm Dougherty
Director
California Department of Transportation
P.O. Box 942873
Sacramento, CA 94273-0001

The Honorable Michael Picker
President
California Public Utilities Commission
505 Van Ness Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94102

Dear Director Dougherty and Commissioner Picker:

We write to express our concerns about the tragic transportation accident that occurred when Metrolink Ventura County Line 102 crashed into a truck along the train tracks in Oxnard and the recent Amtrak crash at a rail-highway crossing along the same corridor. We urge CALTRANS and the CPUC to make addressing safety at these intersections a top priority.

While there are many unanswered questions about these accidents, Tuesday morning was not the first time that an accident has occurred at the Rice Avenue intersection in Oxnard. This is a heavily trafficked corridor for both rail freight movement, passenger rail (Amtrak and Metrolink), as well as automobiles and truck traffic. The Oxnard grade separation project was even brought up as an example of Ventura County's unfunded transportation project needs at a roundtable that we organized with community stakeholders, one day prior to the crash.

Traffic congestion and safety are among the many reasons why the Ventura County Transportation Commission has put the Rice Ave project in its long-range plan. Unfortunately, the county and city do not have funds to pay for the estimated \$35 million construction cost of the proposed bridge to separate the rail and roadway traffic.

As members of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, we are working diligently to get more funding to state and local transportation planners to address transportation needs. However, as you know, we are prohibited from earmarking funds for specific projects. Therefore, we urge CALTRANS and the CPUC to make safety improvements at the Rice Avenue intersection and other rail-highway crossings along the corridor a top state priority.

According to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), between 2006 and 2014, the State of California received over \$142 million intended specifically for highway-rail grade crossing improvements, but has only obligated \$99.9 million, meaning the state has over \$42 million in unobligated federal money on the table. Therefore, we request that these unobligated funds be provided to address the immediate safety concerns at Rice Avenue in Oxnard and other rail-highway crossings along the corridor.

At the federal level, we will continue to work diligently to provide additional resources to states and local communities for transportation needs. Americans are rightly frustrated with our nation's crumbling infrastructure, including increasingly congested highways and deficient roads and bridges. Forty-two percent of America's major urban highways remain congested, costing commuters \$121 billion in wasted time and fuel, or an average of \$818 per commuter. If the status quo continues, congestion is estimated to grow from \$121

billion to \$199 billion in 2020, adjusted for inflation. Furthermore, congestion on the Interstate System alone costs freight trucks more than 141 million hours in wasted time, equivalent to 51,000 drivers sitting idle for a working year.

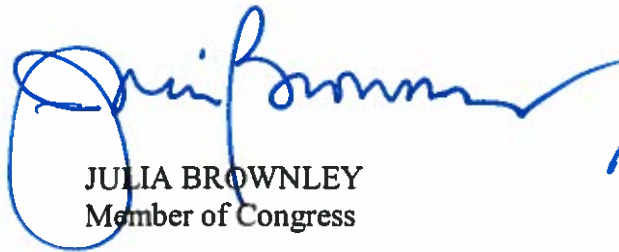
According to the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), all levels of government would need to invest a minimum of \$124 billion a year to improve the conditions and performance of our roads and bridges, compared to \$88 billion spent by all levels of government in 2010 on capital projects.

Congress faces many challenges, but finding a solution for funding the Highway and Transit Trust Funds must be a priority for our committee. Instead of another short-term funding patch that only delays tough decisions, we believe that Congress must work on a bi-partisan basis to find a long-term, sustainable financing mechanism that works.

We need to see investments in infrastructure for what they are: investments in our future, investments in safety, and investments in our nation's economic prosperity.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of our request for funds. We look forward to working with the State of California in a cooperative way to ensure the next federal surface transportation reauthorization bill provides robust funding for state and local highway and transit needs.

Sincerely,



JULIA BROWNLEY
Member of Congress



PETER A. DEFAZIO
Member of Congress

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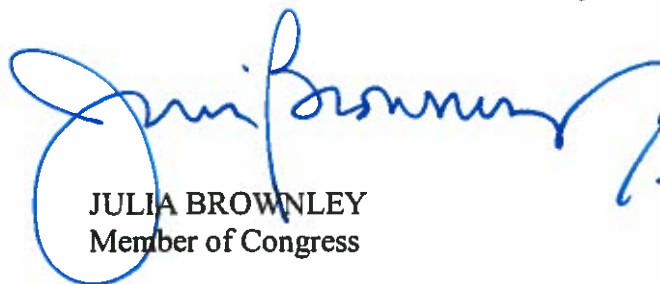
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