April 14, 2022

The Honorable Peter Paul Montgomery Buttigieg
Secretary
US Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Re: Support for Sunset Road: Silverbell to River Road RAISE Proposal

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

On behalf of the City of Tucson, I am writing to affirm the City of Tucson’s collaboration with Pima County to extend Sunset Road from Silverbell to River Road. The City fully supports the County’s grant application for the Fiscal Year 2022 Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant. This project has local and regional significance to make City and County community and economic infrastructure safer, more accessible, and more sustainable.

Regional Planning

This project connects the northeastern Tucson metropolitan area to Interstate 10 (I-10) via an extension from River Road with a new traffic interchange. It will provide a new east-west interconnection point that will provide greater connectivity between two northern jurisdictions that are within the city’s boundaries but which are currently disconnected. Similarly, this extension will provide greater connectivity between communities within the City’s boundaries and unincorporated Pima County. This project is part of a larger partnership between the City, County and the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT), to widen I-10 and enhance regional circulation by providing additional east-west throughways that overcome a number of barriers and safety issues (such as existing rail crossings that are not currently grade separated). The City, County, ADOT and the Pima Association of
Governments have jointly discussed the need for this extension, equally participating in the design, implementation and long-term maintenance of this road. Once road construction is completed, the City looks forward to exploring opportunities to expand mass transit to serve low and moderate-income neighborhoods north of Grant Road and west of I-10, including the possibility of a transit center co-located at the Sunset Campus.

Economic Development

The City and County have also collaborated with other regional partners on development of a long range economic blueprint and a “Pivot Playbook” defining strategies for post-pandemic recovery. The immediate area to the west of the proposed extension includes a large parcel of land that is targeted for economic development. This parcel of land, known as the Sunset Innovation Campus, is currently reclaimed land, wholly within the City’s boundaries. It is well positioned within the metropolitan Tucson area to be a magnet for business development, high paying jobs, recreational opportunities and additional residential housing. While there is connectivity to the Campus now from the north and west sides, it is dependent on the extension of Sunset Road for connectivity to the east side. Providing this access will greatly support the communities that lie to the east, which are constrained by existing infrastructure (including I-10) from further economic development. In the subsequent phases of development of the Campus, City of Tucson will collaborate with the County in identifying economic development tools to encourage job creation and affordable workforce housing to benefit low income and underserved residents of the surrounding neighborhoods and larger metropolitan area. The City has a number of economic development tools that could be useful to attract jobs and amenities to support this campus and surrounding neighborhoods, including incentive programs to induce primary job creation (construction abatement), site specific sales tax incentives, and various incentives to help businesses locating in the Global Economic Development District.

The City of Tucson is pleased to be affiliated with this effort and to support the County’s application. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Mayor Regina Romero
City of Tucson