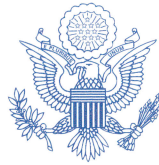


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26TH DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA
MEMBER OF CONGRESS
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October 19, 2015

Mr. David Valenstein, Division Chief
Office of Program Delivery
Federal Railroad Administration
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE, MS 20
Washington, DC 20590

RE: SUPPORT FOR STEP-RAIL GRANT: RICE AVENUE BRIDGE OVER UNION
PACIFIC RAILROAD IN OXNARD, CALIFORNIA

Dear Mr. Valenstein:

I am writing to express my strong support for the California Department of Transportation's (Caltrans) Safe Transportation of Energy Products by Rail (STEP-Rail) application for the Rice Avenue Grade Separation project. This crossing, through which two to three oil trains pass per week, has been identified by Caltrans as a priority grade separation location due to the repeated accidents involving trucks and cars being struck by trains.

Earlier this year, there was significant media attention regarding the need for this bridge following the February 24, 2015 collision of a Metrolink commuter train with a truck using the crossing. The train derailment brought about multiple passenger injuries and tragically the death of the train's engineer. The proposed bridge would eliminate the crossing by diverting Rice Avenue traffic over the railroad, which is used not only by Union Pacific freight trains but also Metrolink and Amtrak. The bridge will also pass over Fifth Street (State Route 34) which runs parallel to the railroad, with ramps provided between the two roadways.

Aside from the volume of hazardous oil trains using this crossing, the importance of the project is magnified because Rice Avenue is the primary truck access route to the Port of Hueneme. As a result, the proposed grade separation will improve freight throughput associated with port truck access, due to the elimination of train blockages at the existing crossing. Furthermore, Rice Avenue provides the best connection between the terminus of Pacific Coast Highway (State Route 1) to the south and US Route 101 to the north, so the project will benefit regional traffic from the western Los Angeles area to points north along the coast.

In addition, the City of Oxnard is well underway with the environmental document preparation for the project, and will provide the required \$600,000 match for the requested \$2,400,000 in federal funds. Due to its critical role in eliminating the conflict between oil trains and other trains and the trucks accessing the Port of Hueneme, this project should be considered a national priority as a goods movement safety project, and thus receive priority for the FRA STEP-Rail program.

Furthermore, due to this corridor's significant role in freight movement throughout the region, the Ventura County Transportation Commission has nominated Rice Avenue for inclusion in the National Freight Network.

For these reasons, I urge you to give full and fair consideration to Caltrans' Safe Transportation of Energy Products by Rail application, consistent with all relevant rules and regulations.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Julia Brownley", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

JULIA BROWNLEY
Member of Congress