



B. GLEN WHITLEY
COUNTY JUDGE
of
TARRANT COUNTY

August 17, 2010

The Honorable Ray LaHood
Secretary of Transportation
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary LaHood:

As Tarrant County Judge and President of the North Central Texas Council of Governments, I want to express my support for the **Tower 55 At-Grade Rail Improvement Project** submitted by Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF). I urge the United States Department of Transportation to select this project to receive TIGER II Grant funding.

Tower 55 is one of the most congested and unsafe at-grade rail intersections in the nation. It is the largest freight bottleneck in the country. Just southeast of downtown Fort Worth and a mile from the county courthouse, the rails cross in the center of Tarrant County, the core of North Texas, the nation's fourth largest urban area. Tower 55 can be jammed with more than 100 trains a day. The backup poses a safety issue for children, pedestrians and drivers. It can stall automobile traffic, delay Amtrak trains and cause idling diesel locomotives and trucks to add pollution in an area long out of attainment for ozone smog. Tower 55 limits economic development in our fast growing North Texas region.

The project is a cost-effective solution that will provide benefits to North Texas and help commerce in the southeast, central and southwest United States. The vast majority of the work is in existing railroad right of way. The project will be implemented by BNSF and Union Pacific railroads, who have agreed to pay for approximately two-thirds of the project cost. There would be new signaling, bridge upgrades and a third north-south mainline added to improve street and pedestrian crossings and to expedite train traffic. The project would eliminate diversion of freight to trucks and other rail lines, a move that could become necessary in a few years.

As stated in the TIGER II grant application, the DFW region is well positioned to deliver this project within the required timeline, to create needed jobs and to further assist in the nation's economic recovery. This project has significant national and regional benefits and I strongly encourage its selection.

Sincerely,

B. Glen Whitley
Tarrant County Judge
President, North Central Texas Council of Governments
President, National Association of Counties