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April 14, 2017

Mr. Tab Townsell  
Executive Director, Metroplan  
501 West Markham Street  
Little Rock, AR 72201

Dear Mr. <sup>TAB</sup>Townsell:

Reference is made to the upcoming amendment to Metroplan's long range transportation plan – Imagine Central Arkansas (ICA).

Currently the 30 Crossing project (Job CA0602) Improvements are listed in the ICA as "Operational Improvements and Reconstruction." All reasonable action alternatives being evaluated in the ongoing National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process would require major widening along the Interstate 30 corridor. Therefore, it is requested that the Metroplan Board of Directors proceed with a Plan amendment at this time to add "Major Widening" to the project's Improvements and to remove the footnotes in the ICA.

As part of this amendment, Metroplan staff has asked for a statement from the Department regarding future improvements that may be needed on adjacent freeways in order to maximize the improvements being proposed for the 30 Crossing corridor. These areas of possible future improvement are Interstate 30 from the South Terminal to 65<sup>th</sup> Street and Interstate 630 from Interstate 30 to the West. Please accept the following statements as the Department's response to this request by Metroplan staff.

- **Interstate 30 from the South Terminal to 65<sup>th</sup> Street** – The Department currently has a project programmed (Job BB0619) to reconstruct Interstate 30 from 65<sup>th</sup> Street to the South Terminal. The Department is also currently studying the Interstate 30 corridor from the South Terminal to Benton to determine what modifications can be made to improve mobility on that corridor. The development of construction plans for BB0619 has been placed on hold pending the results of the Interstate 30 corridor study. Once the results of this study are available, the Department will determine what changes to the scope of Job BB0619 may be needed in order to address the mobility issues on Interstate 30 from 65<sup>th</sup> Street to the South Terminal.
- **Interstate 630 from Interstate 30 to the West** – The Department does not currently have plans to improve Interstate 630 from Interstate 30 to the west. Due to current and anticipated mobility concerns on the corridor, the Highway Commission has provided approval for a future study of this portion of Interstate 630; however, a date has not yet been set for this study to commence. Upon completion of this future study and completion of any project specific NEPA processes resulting from the findings of the study, the Department may implement improvements on Interstate 630 as funding becomes available.

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As part of the ongoing NEPA process, the Department has performed traffic modeling simulations on all reasonable alternatives currently being considered as part of the 30 Crossing project. Although improved mobility is an important part of the project's Purpose and Need statement, complete elimination of congestion in an urban corridor as complex as this is often not feasible and is not a goal of this project. Rather, the project seeks to mitigate the congestion in the corridor in the most effective way possible within the limitations that exist for the project. Consequently, all reasonable alternatives currently being evaluated begin to show some level of congestion during peak traffic hours at certain locations in the corridor prior to the design year of 2041.

Although traffic modeling does show congestion returning to the corridor by the design year of 2041, the improvements proposed in the 30 Crossing project will provide a significant improvement over the congestion that would occur if no improvements are made. In addition, the proposed improvements would ensure that this critical portion of the Central Arkansas Freeway System is built in such a way to be able to maximize the benefits of any future improvements made to adjacent portions of the system.

With this information I am confident a Plan amendment can be drafted to add "Major Widening" to the CA0602 Type of Work description and to remove the footnotes from the project. I am also confident a TIP amendment for the same purpose can immediately follow.

Please advise if additional information is needed.

Sincerely,



Scott E. Bennett, P.E.  
Director of Highways  
and Transportation

c: Highway Commission  
Deputy Director and Chief Operating Officer  
Deputy Director and Chief Engineer  
Assistant Chief Engineer – Planning  
Program Management  
Transportation Planning and Policy  
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