



August 3, 2009

Mr. Raymond H. LaHood
Secretary of Transportation
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, S.E.
Washington, D.C. 20590

**RE: City of Anaheim, California (Orange County) - Gene Autry Way (West)
Highway/Interstate 5 HOV Interchange Project**

Dear Secretary LaHood:

The Anaheim/Orange County Visitor & Convention Bureau strongly urges your support of the Gene Autry Way (West) Highway/I-5 Interchange Project proposed in the City of Anaheim's Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grant application.

Every year approximately 45 million domestic and international travelers visit Orange County for business and leisure. Our Convention Center alone (which would benefit directly from the traffic relief provided by the proposed project) hosts more than 1 million people annually for meetings, conventions, and trade shows, injecting approximately \$900 million into the local economy. Tax revenue generated by conventions in Orange County have contributed to the more than \$1.5 billion in locally funded improvements to Interstate 5 since 1990.

The City and County have worked cooperatively with the Disneyland Resort and other groups to vastly improve the Resort District as a way to encourage visitors to patronize local establishments. Nevertheless, with so many attractions and venues in one area, traffic on Interstate 5 continues to suffer. The Gene Autry Way (West) Highway/I-5 HOV Interchange Project would benefit not only visitors to the Resort District and the Convention Center, but also reduce commute time for local residents, and assist local businesses in drawing in additional customers.

Thank you for your consideration of the Gene Autry Way (West) Highway/I-5 HOV Interchange Project. With construction ready to begin as soon as funding is in place, Orange County residents will quickly benefit from new jobs, and residents and convention-goers alike will appreciate the reduction in traffic congestion.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Charles Ahlers". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Charles Ahlers
President

Celebrating 45 Years of Service