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July 17, 2025

The Honorable Sean Duffy,
U.S. Secretary of Transportation
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, D.C. 20590

RE: I-40 and SH-100 Bridge Replacements over the Arkansas River at Webbers Falls Project

Dear Secretary Duffy,

On behalf of the Cherokee Nation, I am pleased to offer this letter of support for the Oklahoma Department of Transportation's (ODOT) application to the 2026 Large Bridge Investment Program for the replacement of the I-40 and SH-100 bridges over the Arkansas River. These aging bridges are vital infrastructure that directly affect the safety, mobility, and economic vitality of Cherokee citizens and the broader regional community.

These bridges are currently classified as fracture-critical and functionally obsolete and are at risk of becoming structurally deficient. If load restrictions become necessary, the resulting detours would impose significant travel time costs for freight traffic and emergency response. As the only Arkansas River crossings in the area, these structures carry more than 25,000 vehicles daily—including 27% truck traffic—and serve as a critical connection point for local motorists, agricultural producers, freight transporters, and first responders.

Moreover, these bridges are essential to the McClellan-Kerr Arkansas River Navigation System (MKARNS), which facilitates the movement of roughly 5 million tons of freight annually and contributes \$5.6 billion in global waterborne trade. Their replacement ensures continued access to regional and national markets and prevents disruption to a key component of our state's economic infrastructure.

This project aligns with the goals of the Large Bridge Investment Program by advancing high-impact investments that will improve safety, reliability, and efficiency within the Primary Highway Freight System and the MKARNS network. The planned improvements—including widened shoulders, increased railing height, and modern design standards—will enhance emergency access, reduce the risk of structural failure, and support continued economic growth. Additionally, this project will preserve access to essential regional locations, including state parks, federal recreational areas, and the Oklahoma National Guard Training Center at Camp Gruber.

Cherokee Nation recognizes the strategic importance of this project to our tribal communities and the broader northeastern Oklahoma region. We are proud to offer our full support for this initiative and stand ready to collaborate on ensuring its success. Should you have any questions regarding this letter, please contact Robin Allen, Interim Director of Grant Services, at grants@cherokee.org.

Respectfully,

Chuck Hoskin, Jr., *Principal Chief*
Cherokee Nation