

L.M. "Matt" Sebesta, Jr.
County Judge



Lacey Powell
Chief of Staff

Brazoria County

February 13, 2024

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
Secretary of Transportation
United States Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

Brazoria County is pleased to provide a letter of support for the Texas Department of Transportation's (TXDOT) application to U.S. Department of Transportation for a RAISE (Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity) discretionary grant that includes the TXDOT FM 1495 Parking Project. The proposed parking will provide critical freight infrastructure by providing staging and pre-clearance area for truckers accessing Port Freeport.

Port Freeport is a diverse port and a leading economic and jobs catalyst for the Texas Gulf Coast. Port Freeport currently ranks 13th among U.S. ports in total foreign waterborne tonnage handled. Approximately 30 million tons of cargo is transported annually port-wide. According to the 2022 Economic Impact Study completed by the Texas A&M Transportation Institute (TTI), Port Freeport and the Freeport Harbor Channel support 266,300 jobs nationally, generating \$22.5 billion in labor income, with a total national economic impact of \$157.3 billion.

The FM 1495 Parking Project will reduce truck congestion on the state roadway, reduce truck idling and related emissions, and improve access gate and roadway safety. The electric charging stations for trucks will support the transition to cleaner alternative fuels. The sidewalks, ADA ramps and other intersection improvements will provide a safe alternate mode of transportation to trucker drivers when accessing food and retail. At the same time, the proposed pedestrian improvements will provide the underserved adjacent community with an ADA accessible first-last mile connection from transit to Port Freeport. As many as 1,000 people can be working at the Port Freeport public facilities on any given day not including the over-the-road truck drivers.

Port Freeport has been and continues to strategically invest in its container handling terminal, expanded gate facilities, multi-modal access, and the Freeport Harbor Channel. This past year a \$140 million berth extension project was completed adding 1,000 linear feet of berth to the Port's container terminal and two electric super post-Panamax ship-to-shore cranes are on order. In a joint venture with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Port is deepening the Freeport Harbor Channel to depths ranging between 51 feet and 56 feet. The final contract on this \$295 million project was awarded in 2023 and is scheduled for completion by the end of 2025. These investments are attracting new business, investment and jobs to the Port and our community.

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In 2024, Volkswagen Group of Americas will open a 120-ac vehicle processing and distribution facility that will handle 140,000 vehicle imports per year from Mexico and Europe to serve 300 dealers in the United States creating 300 new jobs. In addition, Fresh Del Monte Produce, Inc. is relocating their operations to Port Freeport and will begin operations in 2024. To support the Del Monte operation, an 80,000 square foot chilled cross-dock facility with 80 cargo doors is also being built. Their operation will bring 80 to 100 new jobs to the area.

Thank you for your consideration of TXDOT's RAISE grant application that includes the TXDOT FM 1495 Parking Project. The proposed project will greatly enhance safety and promote economic development and jobs in our region.

Sincerely the members of Brazoria County Commissioners Court,

L.M. "Matt" Sebesta Jr.
Brazoria County Judge

Donald "Dude" Payne
Commissioner, Precinct 1

Ryan Cade
Commissioner, Precinct 2

Stacy Adams
Commissioner, Precinct 3

David Linder
Commissioner, Precinct 4