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The Honorable Pete Buttigieg  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE  
Washington, DC 20590

**Subject: Eliminate the West Option of Interstate-11 through Arizona wilderness, support the East Option to co-locate with I-10 and I-19**

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

The Federal Highway Administration and Arizona Department of Transportation have proposed building the Interstate-11 highway through Sonoran Desert wilderness immediately adjacent to Saguaro National Park and other iconic natural landmarks in the Tucson area. This option, known as the West Option, has been met with nearly unanimous opposition from local governments, organizations, and residents. An alternative East Option exists that would co-locate I-11 with the existing I-19 and I-10 corridors through the Tucson area, offering a far less destructive path.

The Tucson Mountains Association is a 501(c)(4) organization founded in 1934 that represents thousands of residents in the Tucson Mountains area. Our mission is to preserve open space, protect biodiversity, and promote the well-being of residents in the area. **We urge you to do everything in your power to eliminate the West Option and promote the East Option.**

We are far from alone in this request. The Tucson City Council, Pima County Board of Supervisors, Tohono O'odham Nation, Pascua Yaqui Tribe, and Town of Sahuarita all oppose the West Option. Congressman Raúl Grijalva said, "I, along with hundreds of my constituents, remain opposed to any highway that results in widespread environmental destruction to areas in Avra Valley, including Ironwood Forest National Monument, Saguaro National Park, Tucson Mountain Park and Tribal lands."

There are numerous reasons to oppose the West Option. The proposed route would pass **within 0.3 miles** of the west district of Saguaro National Park, a crown jewel of Southern Arizona tourism that draws over one million visitors and generates nearly \$100 million in economic activity each year. The U.S. Department of the Interior warned in 2021 that the West Option would cause "un-mitigatable impacts" that would "substantially diminish the recreational experiences sought by the public in these areas." Additionally, the nearby Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum, which attracts 400,000 visitors annually, would suffer from the proximity of a noisy highway disrupting its world-class outdoor exhibits. Thousands of bicyclists, hikers, and campers who frequent Tucson Mountain Park and adjacent nature reserves would also see their experiences severely degraded. Kitt Peak National Observatory, an internationally renowned astronomy hub, relies on dark skies and would be negatively affected by the light pollution from the proposed route. Finally, many families living along the route would lose their homes. **All of this environmental and economic destruction is unnecessary when a viable alternative—the East Option—exists.**

Co-locating I-11 with I-19 and I-10 through the Tucson area offers a more practical approach to expanding infrastructure. By utilizing existing highway corridors, the East Option minimizes environmental harm and community disruption, while reducing costs compared to constructing a new route. We ask you to take decisive action to reject the West Option and support the East Option.

Enclosed is a short book of photography that shows what would be lost if the West Option is selected. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Ed Hendel  
President, Tucson Mountains Association

