May 3, 2016

Mr. Dave Eller, Regional Transportation Director
CDOT Region 3 Headquarters
222 South 6th Street, Room 317
Grand Junction, CO 81501

Dear Mr. Eller:

The Gunnison County Board of County Commissioners is pleased to offer a letter of support for the Colorado Department of Transportation's application for a FLAP grant for the Little Blue Creek highway project.

Little Blue Creek Canyon is a two mile section of US Highway 50 that provides critical east/west access to Gunnison County and the City of Gunnison. The highway is our link to all points west of Gunnison. The highway is used for the transportation of goods and services, for access by our residents and visitors to regional medical centers, and to bring thousands of visitors into our area to share the beauty of a County that is over 85% public land.

The canyon portion of this route has been a major concern of Gunnison County for over 20 years. We have participated in our Regional Transportation Planning Group, always pushing for improvements to Highway 50 in general, but specifically to this section of highway.

Accident data shows that in the past five years there have been 37 accidents in the canyon with 13 people injured and two fatalities. When the road is closed for an accident the detour adds hours to the trip and Highway 92 is a difficult route for travelers, especially trucks, not used to driving in the mountains. The Gunnison County Fire Protection District responds to accidents on this road with State Patrol, EMS, etc. The Fire Protection crew is very well trained, but they are volunteers and the severity and frequency of accidents on this section of highway taxes their resources. They are a small group and have to cover accidents while maintaining adequate crews for other responses.

When the I-70 corridor is closed much of the truck traffic diverts to Highway 50 rather than taking the north detour route recommended by CDOT. During the recent closure of I-70 during rock fall mitigation work the truck traffic on Highway 50 and through the City of Gunnison was amazing. Many of the drivers do not have experience driving in narrow canyons in the winter and drive the middle of the road. We were fortunate that our weather was generally good and there were no serious accidents. Acknowledging that Highway 50 is going to be used as an alternate route during I-70 closures makes this project even more critical.

Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to support this project which is important not only to Gunnison County, but to the entire West Slope of Colorado.

Sincerely,

Paula Swenson, Chairperson	Phil Chamberland, Commissioner	Jonathan Houck, Commissioner