



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0917

October 22, 2026

The Honorable Sean McMaster
Administrator
Federal Highway Administration
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Administrator McMaster:

I offer this letter in support of an application to the Federal Highway Administration's Bridge Investment Program (BIP) submitted by Lee County, Florida, to replace the Cape Coral Bridge. The project's aim is consistent with the statutory objectives of the BIP by improving the safety, efficiency, and reliability of the movement of people and freight over a heavily utilized bridge. This eligible use of funds would strengthen long-term resilience for new and existing economic output in a robust southwest Florida marketplace. I respectfully urge FHWA to give the application full and favorable consideration in the FY 2026 selection process.

Bridge Condition, Safety, and Regional Transportation Needs

The Cape Coral Bridge carries approximately 50,000 trips each day across the Caloosahatchee River, which bisects the county and acts as a key component connecting Florida's Lake Okeechobee to the Gulf of Mexico. This crossing is traveled more than six times the Bureau of Transportation Statistics' national daily average for bridges, and its importance to the region's mobility is no less. The existing bridges have also exceeded their functional life, raising the urgency of the safety demands that any volume of traffic of this magnitude present. The project would replace the current infrastructure with a modern facility that provides additional lanes designed to meet current and future transportation needs across two of the fastest growing cities in Florida: Cape Coral and Fort Myers.

These considerations directly implicate the BIP's statutory focus on bridges that require investment to improve condition and bridges that do not meet current geometric, load, or traffic requirements typical of their regional transportation network. With limited alternative crossings of the Caloosahatchee River, maintaining a reliable connection is particularly important to regional mobility demands and to the movement of east-west freight.

Mobility, Economic Benefits, and Cost Effectiveness

The project advances the substantial mobility and economic objectives that qualify an application for the BIP. The bridge is a critical connection between Cape Coral and Fort Myers and provides access to U.S. 41, Interstate 75, Southwest Florida International Airport, and other major regional destinations. Its replacement will improve reliability and reduce the economic consequences of congestion, disruption, and potential bridge closures.

Lee County's BIP Benefit-Cost Analysis estimates approximately \$589.3 million in benefits compared with \$244.5 million in project costs, producing approximately \$344.9 million in net benefits over 20 years in today's dollars. These results provide strong evidence that the project's transportation, safety, economic, and resilience benefits are expected to outweigh its costs, consistent with the BIP's statutory cost-effectiveness standard.

Resilience and Natural Disaster Preparedness

The project also directly satisfies the BIP's statutory authorization for long-term resiliency to extreme weather, flooding, and other natural disasters through incorporating more robust protective design and hardening. Southwest Florida has experienced repeated hurricane devastation in recent years, including Hurricane Ian (Cat 4) in 2022 and sequential Hurricanes Helene (Cat 4) and Milton (Cat 3) in 2024. These events revealed the consequences of disruption to critical transportation infrastructure and the importance of reliable crossings for evacuation, emergency response, and recovery.

Lee County has since been ranked the nation's most hurricane-vulnerable county in a 2026 national analysis drawing on FEMA's National Risk Index, NOAA hurricane history, and other federal data. Replacing the Cape Coral Bridge would provide a more resilient transportation connection in a region uniquely exposed to hurricanes and flooding. Given the limited number of alternative river crossings, the resilience considerations extend well-beyond the bridge itself to the broader regional disaster preparation and recovery strategies.

Economic Competitiveness and Continued Growth

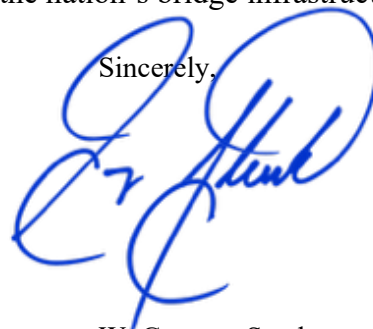
The state of Florida is a network of thriving regional economies, and southwest Florida is undoubtedly at the forefront of residential and commercial investment. Southwest Florida International Airport (RSW) is undertaking an approximately \$1.4 billion terminal expansion, while Lee County welcomed more than 3.3 million visitors in 2025, generating more than \$3.3 billion in direct spending. The Cape Coral Bridge is integral to the movement of residents, workers, visitors, and freight that drive the region's economy.

The project therefore offers the federal government an opportunity to leverage a significant investment in an essential transportation asset while supporting continued economic growth and improving the reliability of a major regional corridor.

For these reasons, the Cape Coral Bridge project presents a compelling case under the BIP's statutory evaluation framework. It addresses a significant bridge investment need; provides substantial person and freight mobility, safety, economic, and resilience benefits; demonstrates favorable benefit-cost performance; and serves a crucial regional transportation function.

I respectfully request that FHWA give Lee County's application full and favorable consideration consistent with its merits as the FY 2026 BIP selection process proceeds. I appreciate your consideration of this important project and your continued efforts to strengthen the nation's bridge infrastructure.

Sincerely,



W. Gregory Steube
Member of Congress