



Alberto Bacó Bagué  
Secretary

April 23, 2014

The Honorable Anthony Foxx  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, DC 20590

**RE: Puerto Rico Eastern region Multimodal Transportation Plan: Connecting People to Jobs and Services – TIGER Grant Request, San Juan, PR**

Dear Secretary Foxx:

 I am writing to express our support for Puerto Rico's Tiger Grant Request for the Eastern Region Multimodal Transportation Plan. This is a comprehensive Plan that will improve the eastern region's transportation infrastructure in an area that historically has been one of the most impoverished in Puerto Rico. This situation was exacerbated with the closure of Naval Station Roosevelt Roads in 2004. Underscoring the magnitude of the current economic and social condition of the area, the unemployment rates for the municipalities included in our request and other adjacent towns are: Vieques (17.0%), Culebra (11.3%), Ceiba (15.6%), Naguabo (17.4%), Humacao (17.1%), Fajardo (16.6%) and Luquillo (17.7%), to name a few.<sup>1</sup>

The proposed project aims to develop a regional, multimodal transportation plan between Roosevelt Roads and Vieques-Culebra in order to (i) diversify the opportunities for mobility of residents, visitors and cargo (via a new maritime route) between Vieques, Culebra and the rest of Puerto Rico; (ii) repair and enhance Roosevelt Roads' surface connections with neighboring urban centers of Ceiba and Naguabo; (iii) enhance multimodal connections in Vieques and Culebra and between these island-municipalities and the East of Puerto Rico for residents and visitors; and (iv) connect Vieques and Culebra residents to the economic activities planned for Roosevelt Roads in order to foster their economic mobility.

---

<sup>1</sup> Puerto Rico Department of Labor and Human Resources, Bureau of Statistics, October 2013.



There are several initiatives underway for the region that coupled with this Tiger Grant Request Plan will help to drive job creation and economic growth in the area. For example, the redevelopment of former Naval Station Roosevelt Roads in Ceiba is part of Governor Alejandro García Padilla's economic development strategy aimed at attracting private investments, creating jobs, and spurring economic growth in the towns of Ceiba and Naguabo, the eastern region, including Vieques and Culebra, and Puerto Rico as a whole. This project is comprised of approximately 8,720 acres of high economic, ecological, historical, and cultural value. Therefore, this is one of Puerto Rico's foremost economic development initiatives.

Indeed, we believe that the regional Multimodal Plan will complement the Roosevelt Roads redevelopment project, and our overall economic development strategy for this entire area. When President Barack Obama came into office on January 2009 he expanded the President's Task Force on Puerto Rico's Status to include recommendations for economic development projects of this nature. He made good on his promise when he published the Task Force Report on March 2011, which included suggestions on how federal agencies can better address several areas of the Island's economy, among other issues.

As Secretary of the Department of Economic Development and Commerce of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, my department is pledging \$50,000 as a matching contribution towards this proposed Tiger Grant Request for the Eastern region Multimodal Transportation Plan. I am also aware that the Local Redevelopment Authority for Roosevelt Roads is pledging another \$50,000 towards this project, for a total of \$100,000 in matching funds.

 Again, I reaffirm our support for this TIGER grant application so we can help the people of the eastern region of the Island attain a better quality of life for themselves, and their communities. Let us work together so that we turn around the historical misfortunes that have plagued the area into opportunities that help its residents lift themselves up through their own hard work.

Sincerely,



Alberto Bacó Bagué  
Secretary

Department of Economic Development  
and Commerce