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Mayor, Council, and fellow citizens of Cibolo,

The following is an open letter from the Cibolo Economic Development Corporation (EDC) stating our concerns with the future of transportation for our City. At the October 18, 2018, EDC Board Meeting, the Board of Directors, by majority vote approved sending a letter of support for a north-south roadway connector from FM 1103/I-35 to I-10. This support is informed by information the EDC gleaned at the August 2018 board meeting when meeting with representatives from the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT). These representatives presented some disheartening news: Cibolo is last on the list of areas to receive improvements from TxDOT's I-35 and I-10 projects. The multi-year work will widen both interstates and improve connections between the roadway and connecting thoroughfares in multiple cities. Critically for our City, FM 1103 will be under construction for at least the next 5 years, there are no plans to improve the Wiederstein overpass, and TxDOT will not build a route to the south to I-10. We believe we must, as a City, address our mobility issues.

Cibolo and the surrounding region are experiencing booming growth in several areas, but particularly in residential development with commercial development lagging at least in part due to lacking transportation infrastructure. While this increase in population provides increased tax revenue, the taxes collected are not keeping pace with the cost of infrastructure development needed to keep Cibolo safe, increase mobility around town, and attract more businesses with shovel-ready sites. Hence, this year's tax rate increase. This constant residential development compounds these challenges with an increase of traffic on our already stressed roads.

A high-quality roadway connecting FM 1103/I-35 to I-10 is essential for the future growth of Cibolo. Having a bridge to bypass the consistently increasing amount of railroad traffic across FM 78 will enhance public safety by decreasing response times for fire and police. Additionally, it can be a critical component in attracting a high-capacity hospital or regional medical facility that will benefit the community through improved life-saving facilities as well as employment opportunities. Furthermore, a straight connection to major highways will benefit many citizens through reduced commute times to work, school, and leisure activities, helping solidify a higher quality of life expected from "the City of Choice."

With TxDOT unwilling to develop a route south, congestion to I-35 for the foreseeable future, continued explosive residential growth, and no desire to continue to increase taxes, we believe the Cibolo Parkway project, aka the tollroad, must be thoroughly reviewed and developed. The Parkway is being built by an independent entity, Texas Turnpike Corporation (TTC), and will not require the city to tap into its tax base to build. Many citizens are skeptical of this and therefore, it is incumbent on the City and TTC to demonstrate this to be true.

While the EDC understands some residents have concerns about the presence of tolled roads, there is no other option for our City to develop a thoroughfare to I-10. If the decision to develop the Parkway is rolled back, gridlock and a challenging economic development environment will be the future for Cibolo residents, negatively impacting our “City of Choice” status for residents and potential businesses. We also believe the 4-lane option should be given another look as there are concerns that the 2-lane option will not satisfactorily address the need.

Another concern that must be addressed by the city and TTC is the level of use of eminent domain to complete the route. This Board strongly encourages the city and TTC to be open, transparent, and responsive and do everything in their powers to be considerate and sensitive to the concerns of the impacted citizens. While some level of eminent domain may be required, it should be kept to the absolute minimum possible and citizens should be included in the dialogue.

Citizens also have a responsibility to get the facts. This issue is too important to the future of Cibolo for individuals to allow rumor and speculation to dominate the conversation. Social media should not be the primary source for people to get information on the project. This is a shared responsibility as we have called out earlier, the City and TTC need to be open, transparent and responsive.

We continue to welcome new residents and businesses which is a great thing bringing increased commercial and residential development and a larger tax base that will fund many projects along the way. We are excited about the opportunities in front of us. We hope that our residents, the City and TTC can develop a relationship that will permit this project to move forward so we may all enjoy the benefits of more options for increased mobility and greater benefit from the increased economic development.