



Economic Development Council
of Okaloosa County, Florida

May 16, 2018

Commissioner Graham Fountain, Chairman, Okaloosa County Board of County Commissioners
Councilman J.B. Whitten, President, Crestview City Council

Dear Chairman Fountain and President Whitten:

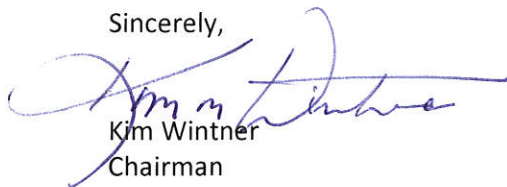
The Economic Development Council of Okaloosa County is pleased to submit this letter of support for joint efforts undertaken by the Okaloosa County Board of County Commissioners and the Crestview City Council to relieve the long-standing and debilitating traffic congestion on SR 85. As you both know, excessive traffic congestion such as what is routinely experienced on SR 85 has a myriad of negative economic impacts. Examples of these include:

- Excessive commute times for employees, impacting both employee recruitment and retention
- Unnecessary delays in the shipment of inbound and outbound materials, supplies and product
- Negative impacts on businesses that depend on foot traffic
- A less than inviting experience for visitors, potentially impacting sales tax / bed tax revenue

In addition, and of particular note, is the significant strain that SR 85 gridlock is placing on our vital military missions at the 7th Special Forces, Duke Field, Camp Rudder, Hurlburt Field and Eglin Air Force Base. With these installations and missions generating a combined \$9.7 billion annual economic impact and providing some 72,000 local jobs, the steps you are taking to resolve SR 85 congestion are absolutely vital to not only our national security, but also to our community's economic future.

The EDC recognizes that the multi-phased, multi-pronged strategies currently being developed by the Okaloosa County Board of County Commissioners and the City of Crestview are complex and costly. However, like both of you, we also understand that the alternative of "doing nothing" will be even more costly to our community in the long run. As we readily acknowledge the impact of SR 85 gridlock to our local and regional economy, please know that we stand in full support of any and all reasonable strategies you jointly identify to solve these considerable challenges.

Sincerely,



Kim Wintner
Chairman
EDC of Okaloosa County



Nathan Sparks, CEcD
Executive Director
EDC of Okaloosa County

CC: Okaloosa County Board of County Commissioners
Crestview City Council
Mr. John Hofstad, Okaloosa County Administrator
Ms. Elizabeth Roy, Crestview City Clerk