Constructing the I-70/Picadilly Road interchange is a critical step forward to substantially improving overall access and freight mobility throughout our metro area. I-70 is on the National Highway Freight Network and is designated on the National Highway System. The Picadilly Road corridor, immediately north of I-70, serves major employment centers hosting multiple freight distribution and logistics hubs. Currently, there is limited access to I-70 in this rapidly growing area. Picadilly Road stops short north and south of I-70 with no Interstate connection. Local freight movements and other vehicular travel throughout this large employment area must either use an I-70 interchange with convoluted access a mile to the east, or the highly congested Tower Road interchange, two miles to the west.

Construction of the I-70 Picadilly Interchange project will add new north-south connectivity by delivering a much-needed interchange where I-70 intersects with Picadilly Road, thereby producing a transportation network that can connect people and commerce to existing employment centers with an emphasis on distribution, fulfillment and logistic functions. The importance of the I-70/Picadilly Road interchange has been recognized for the last 12 years when a NEPA study was initiated and completed in the area and identified this particular interchange as a high priority need. This interchange has been on the Denver Regional Council of Government’s (DRCOG) Regional Transportation Plan since 2005.

The Picadilly Road corridor is critical in delivering direct access to multiple job, retail and residential centers as well as providing efficient access for freight activity serving local, regional and international commercial markets. Picadilly Road is also a vital corridor for accessing Denver International Airport (DIA) and environs. A globally-focused Aerotropolis development framework consisting of world-class, commercial, logistics and residential communities is emerging in this area and Picadilly Road with an accompanying I-70 interchange will deliver the proper key regional travel corridor serving this significant economic opportunity for the entire metro area, Colorado and the intermountain west region. An estimated 75,000 jobs are forecast to be situated in this area by 2040.

The I-70/Picadilly Interchange will serve the intermodal connectivity needs of 57.2 million square feet of existing and developing corporate distribution centers that use nearby air, rail, and over the road delivery vehicles to reach regional, national, and international markets. Simultaneously, it will relieve severe morning and evening traffic bottlenecks and reduce congestion-related crashes throughout the surrounding transportation network by providing much more direct access to and from Interstate 70. Additionally, the project improves intermodal operations, enhances freight connections with DIA, and provides needed connectivity for emergency vehicles and travelers in the area. Additionally, the interchange influence area is within a designated Foreign Trade Zone, fostering the likelihood of international commerce having more access to manufacture locally with an interchange serving the direct needs of customers and product distribution requirements.

The necessary overall local, state, and federal NEPA process approvals were completed in 2006. The city has initiated steps to further update these and will be poised to start construction in early 2020. The I-70/Picadilly Interchange is a linchpin project in position to unlock eight miles of critical north-south arterial road in an area realizing tremendous growth. The I-70/Picadilly Interchange is the missing piece of the transportation system that will better serve extensive existing and eminent future development when completed.

This critical mobility infrastructure investment is estimated to yield $198 million in benefits and presents a benefit-cost ratio of 8.7. A strong level of financial participation from the city and contribution by the private sector coupled with INFRA grant funds will provide a remarkable estimated internal rate of return of 37.7 percent on this project.

The city asks the Colorado Congressional delegation and the Department of Transportation to support our request for $15.6 million in federal funding from the Infrastructure For Rebuilding America (INFRA) Grant Program backed by a $10.4 million local and private sector match for the I-70 Picadilly Interchange project.
The city of Aurora requests Colorado Congressional delegation support for an increase in funding for the CDBG and HOME programs. In addition, the city requests federal agencies support for the following:

• Programs that preserve housing for extremely low-income households.
• Programs that address chronic homelessness among veterans, youth, and families.
• An increase in the number of HUD-VASH vouchers allocated for Aurora.
• Raise the Davis-Bacon project threshold to $250,000 for non-residential and increase the CDBG housing unit threshold to 12 units to coincide with the HOME program.
• Section 3 – raise the recipient thresholds to $750,000 from the current $200,000 and apply the Section 3 requirements to covered contracts over $500,000.
• Eliminate the 15% set-aside of HOME funds for CHDOs.
• ESG – remove the 60% cap that may be used for emergency shelter.

The increased cost of housing in the city of Aurora, as with many cities across the country, has reached a crisis level and continues to worsen. These high housing costs have contributed to a dramatic increase in homelessness. The city of Aurora relies on its annual allocation of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and Home Investment Partnership (HOME) funds from HUD. The programs help to create a suitable living environment for low- and moderate-income persons, households and neighborhoods through funding the preservation and development of affordable housing, improving public infrastructure, and expanding economic opportunities.

The city’s housing authority is currently the recipient of only 117 HUD-VASH vouchers, despite being the third largest city in the state and with a large veteran demographic. With the completed VA Regional Medical Center in Aurora, we anticipate a sharp increase in the number of homeless veterans, making additional HUD-VASH vouchers critical.

The city will closely monitor developments in Congress on comprehensive infrastructure legislation. The city would be supportive of legislation that addresses current program funding shortages.

Increase overall funding of the Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (STBGP) and increase the percentage of sub-allocation to urbanized areas. Increase the federal gas tax and/or index it to inflation. Increase funding for Transit Oriented Development (TOD) opportunities. Provide additional funding for multimodal projects that promote economic development and safety.
**WATER**

In May 2014, the city Council approved the license of retail marijuana establishments throughout the city of Aurora. The Council authorized 24 retail marijuana store licenses, with four licenses allowed in each of the six Council wards. However, the use, possession and sale of cannabis still remains a federal crime. This conflict in federal and local marijuana laws has made it difficult for legitimate recreational marijuana businesses to access basic banking services. With financial institutions hesitant to provide services to cannabis businesses, the industry has become cash reliant, creating public safety issues and the potential for money laundering to become more prevalent.

### Request

The city of Aurora asks the Colorado Congressional delegation to lift the illegality of banking services to the cannabis industry. Toward that end, the city asks for support of legislation that would prohibit penalizing a bank for providing financial services to a legitimate state-sanctioned and regulated cannabis business.

**Aurora water supplies originate in the headwaters of three major basins within Colorado and include the Arapahoe, San Isabel, and White River National Forests. Protecting Aurora’s watersheds, including these National Forests, from devastating wildfires is critical to the success of the Aurora’s mission to enhance and protect the quality of life for Aurora citizens by providing safe, dependable, and sustainable water services. Aurora’s municipal water supplies suffered greatly as a result of previous forest fires. Barriers to prevention and restoration from wildfire are natural (forest and soil conditions, physical watershed conditions, and the sequence and magnitude of rain falling on the burned area) and man-made (overly burdensome rules, regulations, and laws). To adequately respond to fire or post-fire emergencies, permits from the Army Corps of Engineers and U.S. Forest Service may be required immediately, but can take more than a year to secure, even when issued on an “expedited basis.” Prevention and mitigation work is delayed by the lengthy National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process.

In 2018, Congress provided a solution to the “fire borrowing” issue in the FY 2018 appropriations bill, and acted favorably for limited forest health treatment categorical exclusions that will assist with on the ground actions in areas with those specific forest types. However, the current forest health treatment categorical exclusions do not include all forest types within Aurora’s watersheds. As a follow up to the great work in 2018, an expansion of the categorical exclusions to include Fire Regime 4 (lodgepole pine) would allow efficient use of federal and local resources to protect Colorado’s water supplies from fire and post-fire disasters. Healthy Forests will continue to be a priority for resilient and reliable drinking water supplies and request Congress to keep the issue at the forefront for funding and improving on forest treatment actions.

### Request

1. **Aurora requests that Congress appropriate adequate and equitable funding for U.S. Forest Service Region 2 programs that protect our headwater forests.**
2. **Aurora requests that forest health treatment categorical exclusions be expanded to include Fire Regime 4 (lodgepole) which dominates the critical watersheds within Colorado in the FY 2020 Interior/Environment Appropriations bill or other relevant legislation.**
The city of Aurora is home to Buckley Air Force Base, serving more than 92,000 active duty, National Guard, Reserve and retired personnel throughout Aurora and the surrounding community. The Base hosts the 460th Space Wing, a unit of the U.S. Air Force Space Command, as well as the Colorado National Guard 120th Fighter Squadron. Since its establishment in 1943, Buckley Air Force Base has served a critical role in the economic vitality of the city of Aurora. In the face of budget cuts and a potential base realignment and closure process, one of the city’s highest priorities is the support of the ongoing mission of the Base.

Toward that end, the city has prioritized the widening and extension of 6th Ave. to better support access to the Base. The city of Aurora has also been engaged in a mission-supportive endeavor during the past several years to plan and implement a Compatible Use Buffer Project with a focus on preventing incompatible development around the Base. The city and its partners submitted an application in 2014 to the Department of Defense’s Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration (REPI) Program. The application set the initial funding parameters (i.e. $13.3M request) and resulted in Buckley’s designation as an approved project. A total of $9M was awarded in FY 2016. REPI funding can be awarded in subsequent fiscal years without Buckley having to submit a follow-up application.

In addition to the REPI, the city is interested in the implementation in funding of the newly created Defense Community Infrastructure Program.

**Request**

The city of Aurora asks the Colorado Congressional delegation to continue support of Buckley Air Force Base and assist in directing future missions to the Base. In particular, the city supports the Colorado Air National Guards request for Buckley AFB to be an F-35 bed down base. In addition, the city of Aurora also asks for support for approval of additional federal REPI dollars to strategically implement the Compatible Use Buffer Project to protect the viability of the Base’s operations and defense capabilities.
Colorado has one of the most comprehensive and successful aquatic nuisance species (ANS) abatement programs in the country. ANS are a significant and rapidly growing threat to Colorado’s water supply infrastructure and to outdoor recreation. ANS include invasive animals, plants, and disease-causing pathogens that are not native to Colorado’s rivers, lakes, streams, and wetlands, and have harmful effects on natural resources, water supply systems, and recreational opportunities. Aurora’s invasive species include zebra and quagga mussels—which are very prolific once established—and cause shell buildup and blockages of pipes, valves and other facilities, which are used to convey water.

The Cities of Aurora and Colorado Springs provide the majority of funding for inspection programs targeting aquatic nuisance species at both Bureau of Reclamation owned Turquoise and Twin Lakes Reservoirs, with additional funding provided by the Pueblo Board of Water Works, the U.S. Forest Service, and Colorado Parks and Wildlife. Even though these facilities are managed by the federal Bureau of Reclamation, the Bureau is currently unwilling to provide funding for any ANS inspection program. Other federal agencies, such as the Army Corps of Engineers, fund ANS prevention and treatment at their federally owned facilities. The city of Aurora spends approximately $35,000 for inspection at both reservoirs, with that amount increasing in the future as funding from the State of Colorado is also anticipated to decrease significantly.

The city of Aurora encourages Congress to provide funding for aquatic nuisance species inspection programs at federal facilities in Colorado, including Twin Lakes and Turquoise Reservoirs, in the annual FY 2020 Energy and Water Appropriations bill. The city of Aurora also requests that the Bureau of Reclamation prioritize funding for their facilities in Colorado.