



# CITY OF PALM DESERT

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September 21, 2023

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg  
Secretary of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE  
Washington, DC 20590

**Re: CVAG's ACCESS Indian Canyon Drive Project – Support**

Dear Mr. Secretary:

I am writing on behalf of the City of Palm Desert to express our strong support of the Coachella Valley Association of Governments' (CVAG) application to the United States Department of Transportation's Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods (RCN) Program. CVAG's Addressing Climate Change, Emergencies and Sand Storms (ACCESS) project aims to protect vulnerable communities from frequent and prolonged road closures on Indian Canyon Drive caused by weather events. Frequent sandstorms, including haboobs, cause zero visibility for drivers and reduced tractions. In addition, rainfall easily creates flooding, which can close the road for days. If awarded funds from the RCN program, CVAG's ACCESS project will help make resiliency improvements to Indian Canyon Drive, enhancing public health and safety while improving the quality of life for residents and visitors in the Coachella Valley.

Addressing this issue is crucial as climate change continues to adversely impact our desert environment, leading to more extreme weather events like flooding and sandstorms. These natural occurrences cause significant damage to our roads, disrupting transportation networks and negatively affecting the lives of residents, businesses, and visitors. The closure of Indian Canyon Drive, for example, cuts off access to job centers, schools, childcare, essential goods, and medical services, including the region's sole Level 1 Trauma Center, Desert Regional Medical Center. Delays resulting from detours during medical emergencies can be a matter of life or death. During severe winds or flooding, our first responders are tasked with rescuing drivers who become stuck in the sand, mud, and dangerous currents. Visitors to the Coachella Valley who are unaware of the dangers presented by Indian Canyon are at great risk when they try to circumvent barriers.

Implementing a dedicated program to tackle these challenges is crucial to safeguarding the accessibility and safety of our road infrastructure, ensuring that our community remains protected, connected, and resilient even in the face of changing climatic conditions. CVAG's ACCESS project represents a vital step towards building a resilient transportation system capable of withstanding the challenges posed by climate change and ensuring the well-being of our community. Therefore, we wholeheartedly support CVAG's application to the RCN program for the ACCESS Indian Canyon Drive project and eagerly anticipate your favorable consideration.

Sincerely,

Kathleen Kelly, Mayor  
City of Palm Desert