



April 22, 2021

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
U.S. House of Representatives
1236 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
Attn: Robert Edmonson, Chief of Staff

Subject: Letter of Support for the Golden Gate Bridge Physical Suicide Deterrent System (SDS)

Dear Madame Speaker,

The Golden Gate Bridge, Highway and Transportation District (District) requests your consideration and support for \$7 million to complete the construction of the Physical Suicide Deterrent System (SDS) project. When completed, the SDS project will serve as a deterrent to prevent those at risk of harming themselves from jumping off the Golden Gate Bridge. This request will bring the federal share to 65 percent of the \$216 million total cost. The remaining 35 percent of funding comes from state and local sources, including \$68 million of Bridge toll revenues.

Besides being a critical lifeline for transportation and goods movement in the San Francisco Bay Area, the Golden Gate Bridge is also an internationally recognized icon and a powerful symbol of the American spirit, immortalized in history and pop culture. Along with this unique distinction, it can also become a destination for individuals seeking a final refuge from their personal struggles. In 2020, 213 people came to the Golden Gate Bridge to commit suicide by jumping off the Bridge. Sadly, 28 lost their lives while 185 were stopped by the Bridge's highly trained and compassionate staff working in conjunction with partners from the California Highway Patrol, other law enforcement, and citizen intervention. On average, 30 people or more die from suicide here each year.

The constructed net will be located about twenty feet below the sidewalk and extend outward approximately twenty feet. Steel struts, painted in the Bridge's signature color, will support marine-grade, stainless steel wire rope specifically designed to minimize impacts to Bridge views and appearance so that visitors will continue to enjoy expansive views of San Francisco and Marin while driving, biking and walking across the Bridge.

The project is currently under construction, with completion of the net targeted for July 2023. Unfortunately, contractor delays have increased the cost, necessitating this request which, if funded, will provide the necessary funds to complete the project.

The total project cost of construction is \$216M. Strong support for the project is evident in the makeup of its funding partners, who range from Federal, State and local government all the way

Correspondence to The Honorable Nancy Pelosi

April 22, 2021

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to individual and local donations from members of the community that have been directly affected by suicides on the bridge. \$75M in federal funds from MTC, \$58M in federal funds from Caltrans, \$68M of Golden Gate Bridge District toll funding revenue, \$7 million from the State of California Mental Health Services Funds via State Budget (Prop 63), and over \$400,000 from permit fees and individual and foundation donations. The District seeks an additional \$7M to complete the project.

The District is 100 percent committed to completing this project with the sole purpose of saving lives. The public has spoken with over 3,000 comments received, national media attention, and financial backing from our funding partners and citizens, there can be no question that this is a project of critical regional importance. We strongly urge that the project be favorably considered.

Sincerely,



Denis J. Mulligan
General Manager



**METROPOLITAN
TRANSPORTATION
COMMISSION**

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Napa County and Cities

April 21, 2021

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Deputy Executive Director,
Local Government Services

Denis J. Mulligan
General Manager, Golden Gate Bridge, Highway and Transportation District
Golden Gate Bridge, P.O. Box 29000
Presidio Station, San Francisco, CA 94129

RE: Letter of Regional Transportation Plan Consistency for the Golden Gate Bridge
Physical Suicide Deterrent System Project

Dear Mr. Mulligan:

The Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) submits this letter of support for the federal funding request submitted by the Golden Gate Bridge, Highway and Transportation District (GGBHTD) for the Golden Gate Bridge Physical Suicide Deterrent System project.

The GGBHTD requests \$7 million in federal funding for the Golden Gate Bridge Physical Suicide Deterrent System project. The project will construct a safety net on the east and west sides of the Golden Gate Bridge providing an immeasurable safety benefit. MTC supports this project as being consistent with MTC's Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy, *Plan Bay Area 2040*, adopted by MTC in 2017. Further, MTC confirms that this project is in the regional Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) as MRN050019, and any federal funds approved could be amended into the TIP shortly after approval.

We look forward to continued partnership with the GGBHTD to deliver this regionally significant project. Please contact me at (415) 778-6772, or Mark Dedrick, MTC's Washington representative, at (202) 494-3618, if you need further information on our letter.

Sincerely,

Theresa Romell
Section Director, Funding Policy and Programs
Metropolitan Transportation Commission

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April 20, 2021

Denis Mulligan, CEO
Golden Gate Bridge District

BY EMAIL

Dear Mr. Mulligan,

This year is the eighteenth year since our daughter, Katherine Elizabeth Hull, jumped from the Golden Gate Bridge.

She was a lovely, bright, artistic young woman of 26 who had a way with plants and with dogs and cats. She was a junior at UC Santa Cruz, living off campus with two other girls, getting good grades, working two jobs and volunteering at the local botanical garden. And she was slowly but surely emerging from a ten-year depression.

The summer before she died, she and I backpacked into a hot springs at Big Sur. She was strong and getting stronger. When we reached the stream, we had to cross it 10 times to reach the hot springs. She did it downstream without a hitch, but on the way back, on the final crossing, she fell into the water. She just got a little wet, no broken bones, she almost made it back onto the trail dry.

It pre-figured what befell her just a couple months later. We later learned that people in depression are at greatest risk of suicide when they are coming out of the depression. At that stage they have enough personal cohesion to make a plan and enough personal strength to carry it out. But they have not lived quite long enough to realize that they no longer want to be dead.

If there had been a dog in pain at the side of the road as she drove up the coast to the bridge, if she had had a flat tire—or if there had been an effective barrier at the bridge— I'm sure she would have weathered the final watery threat because research both before and since she died has concluded that 90% of those prevented from taking their lives go on to live out a normal lifespan. She almost made it back onto secure footing.

I have survived the loss and I have regained the joy in living, but still she swims back into my thoughts and will do as long as I live. I know a number of other Survivors and we are all on the same track.

I am also aware that until that net is installed, there is an unending number of parents, brothers, sisters, lovers and friends who are at risk of dying before their time, and an even larger number of parents, brothers, sisters, lovers and friends who will have to find a way through a terrible grief.

I've said it before, but I've never set it down in writing to you:
I support this net project.
I support any funding necessary to see this project completed.
And I thank you for your early, persistent and effective support of it.

David Hull
Survivor
Founding President of Bridge Rail Foundation

MARILEE BROOKS

631 West Poplar Ave, San Mateo, CA 94402 | 650 703 7297



4/21/2021

Denis Mulligan
CEO GGBD

Dear Denis Mulligan:

I am writing as a strong supporter of the Golden Gate Bridge Suicide Net. There are many statistics about why the net is important but a critical one to me is the impulsive nature of suicide and the access to the very lethal Golden Gate Bridge. My life and my children's life tragically changed on February 15, 2007 when my husband, Todd Brooks, said good night to us and then drove up to the Golden Gate Bridge and jumped off. Our son, Grant, was 7 years old and his Dad was his best friend. Our twins, Lindsay and Dana, were 2 years old and lite up when Todd walked into the room.

Todd was a successful venture capitalist and graduated from Cal with a MS in Chemical Engineering and a business degree from Harvard Business School. He was an asset to us and an asset to society and California. He was worth saving and the suicide net would have saved him. He grew up in Mill Valley and the Golden Gate Bridge had great meaning to him. He even jumped to the West to the open ocean.

My children to this day struggle with the trauma from Todd's suicide. Grant is 21 and working hard to reprocess the loss in a healthier way that will let him live his life more freely. He is

battling this head on every day. Dana and Lindsay at 16 struggle with never having a father they knew. Never having a father to love them like only a father can.

Being a Professional Engineer myself, I can say the lack of a suicide deterrent was a design error in the original building of the bridge. We as a society need to correct it and the suicide net will do that. You will receive many letters from survivors and maybe it is just me but most seem to be parents of struggling children that needed help not access to a lethal option. I have trouble going to the survivor meetings because I worry about my children. Selfishly, I will ask for the net to be finished for my children who are alive. Not for my husband who is gone.



**Sincerely,
Marilee Brooks**

165 Fernwood Drive
Moraga, CA 94556-2315
April 22, 2021

Mr. Denis Mulligan
Golden Gate Bridge District
P.O. Box 29000, Presidio Station
San Francisco, CA 94129-9000

Dear Mr. Mulligan,

I want to first thank you for all of the work and effort on your part in the last few years in assuring that a suicide deterrent net will be placed on the Golden Gate Bridge. Without your continued support, along with the Bridge District board members, the chief engineer, Ewa Bauer, and many others in your offices, this might never have happened.

I lost my beloved 28-year-old son, Michael James Bishop, to suicide from the Golden Gate Bridge on March 28, 2011, marking the tenth anniversary last month. My son was a young man of wonderful quality and worth, a caring, sweet, sensitive and talented person. He was a violin player who was part of an orchestra, he was working full time and he was also taking several night classes in anticipation of attending graduate school. His suicide was an impulsive act, undoubtedly brought about by feelings of being overwhelmed, with a sense of inability to cope with his current, seemingly overburdened situation. I was one of the fortunate parents who was left with a suicide note, written and left in his car before he went onto the bridge to jump that fateful morning. It was so obvious from his letter that he was sorry to hurt all of us he left behind but that he just didn't feel he could cope with his life at the moment. I want to emphasize the impulsivity of suicide in so many instances; because, when there are lethal means right at your doorstep, such as the low railing on the iconic Golden Gate Bridge, with a known history for suicide, then it is a recipe for a continuing stream of suicides.

I had presented my personal story of loss to the board members of the GG Bridge District, and brought with me copies of the book *The Final Leap: Suicide on the Golden Gate Bridge* by John Bateson to give to each board member in 2012. I had hoped that if they would just read this book they would be convinced of the necessity to act in doing something to stop these unnecessary suicides from the bridge. I subsequently went before the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, telling them of my loss and pleading with them to approve funds for a suicide deterrent on the bridge. I also became a member of the Bridge Rail Foundation, an organization dedicated to getting something constructively accomplished to stop the suicides from the bridge, which became a deterrent net.

The actual process of getting a net installed on the Golden Gate Bridge has been lengthy and expensive, but mostly due to circumstances well beyond the district's control. And, in the meantime, the suicides continue without pause. We have come so far from where we started, however, and it's imperative that the task be completed by whatever means. It would be absolutely unacceptable to not get this project finally finished.

If there is anything that I can personally offer to further this daunting mission, please let me know. And, again, thank you for your unwavering support to get this suicide deterrent net installed on our beloved Golden Gate Bridge.

With sincere regards,
Kay Y. James

April 21, 2021

Mr. Denis Mulligan,

I wholeheartedly support any additional funding to prevent delays in the construction of suicide deterrent system, which will undoubtedly save lives.

I am the mother of Matthew, who was 20 when he disappeared. That morning I woke up startled and knew everything in my life was wrong. My husband was home, as was my oldest son, but not Matthew.

He didn't answer my texts or calls. I kept trying him throughout the morning but no response. My husband called me at 1:15 pm and told me the police found Matt's car was parked improperly in San Francisco. I panicked, I told Mark to find out more, this wasn't right. Not 2 minutes later he called me. Matt's car was parked in the lot at the Golden Gate Bridge and they saw someone jumped that day. They thought it might be Matthew.

Having a child go missing is devastating but being told he may have jumped from this bridge was horrific. The worst part was waiting for the recovery of his body. The Marin County Coroner told me that it doesn't happen in 15% of the cases. He recommended calling other county coroner offices.

I hope no one else has to experience making those calls. I will never forget the incredibly kind people who took the time with me when I asked if they had any John Does or Partial remains over the next 6 months.

We never did find him. Matthew will never be part of the statistics since his death cannot be confirmed. He will always be in the DOJ Missing Person's database.

Since I lost Matthew, I have been active with BridgeRail Foundation, which allowed me to meet other families with the same experience. We were all devastated by our losses and supported each other in our grief. We helped make a difference by bringing the numbers to life, sharing their name, their face, their lives. Our loved ones mattered.

When someone contacts Bridgerail Foundation they are often referred to me. Newly bereaved families who are looking for explanations and answers. Just last week I was contacted by another family who lost their son at the bridge. The questions I am asked most often is, "Why hasn't something been done? Why isn't the net in place? What are they doing to stop this?"

I don't want to tell them it will never happen. That construction stalled or stopped because of there wasn't enough funding. Having the net in place will be an overwhelming *relief* for all the bereaved families, knowing that no one will feel the grief and loss we have endured. We relive our experience every time we hear of another tragedy.

I sincerely hope you are able to obtain the necessary funding for such an essential project that will save many lives.

Thank you for all your efforts,

Dayna Whitmer