

June 6, 2018

The Honorable Elaine L Chao
Secretary of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE
Washington, DC 20590

Subject: Fiscal Year 2018 BUILD Discretionary Grants Program

Dear Madam Secretary,

On behalf of the Minnesota Department of Transportation, we are writing to express our support for the replacement/rehabilitation of the Nielsville Bridge over the Red River in northwest Minnesota, which permanently closed two years ago due to public safety concerns.

Prior to its closure, the Nielsville Bridge served as a vital regional link between Polk County, Minnesota and Traill County, North Dakota. The importance of the bridge to this area is most apparent during peak harvest time where farmers are moving their agricultural products from their farms to the distribution center on either side of the river. Today, agricultural producers and travelers must detour 11 miles which greatly impacts mobility, commerce and public safety throughout the region. Since the bridge's closure:

- Public Safety concerns have increased. First responders and emergency vehicles have documented delayed response times of up to 30 minutes.
- Economic competitiveness has reduced. Area businesses and major employers have experienced a 20-50 percent decline in gross revenues.
- State of good repair has been threatened. Detour traffic has weakened the remaining transportation system's resiliency and increased maintenance and life-cycle costs on the overall transportation system.
- Quality of life has decreased. Overall mobility, connectivity and access to essential services have been reduced.

Please carefully consider this important funding application and its many merits.

Sincerely,



Mitchell J. Rasmussen
Assistant Commissioner
MnDOT State Aid Engineer

cc: Richard Sanders, Polk County Engineer