

July 11, 2018

The Honorable Elaine L. Chao  
Secretary  
Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE  
Washington, DC 20590-0002

Dear Secretary Chao,

I write to express my strong support for the Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) grant application submitted by Traill County of North Dakota, and Polk County of Minnesota for the Multi-State Regional Connectivity Project to replace the Nielsville Bridge.

Nielsville Bridge is located roughly 30 miles south of Grand Forks, North Dakota, and had been a vital link between Nielsville, Minnesota and Cummings, North Dakota for over 75 years. In September 2015, the bridge was closed due to insurmountable structural deficiencies, which included a large 2-foot by 3-foot hole in the bridge deck's eastbound lane.

Prior to its closure, the bridge was a critical transportation corridor for up to 500 ranchers, farmers, manufacturers, and residents who traveled the bridge daily. As a result of its closure, drivers are now required to travel upwards of 15 miles to the nearest bridge to cross over the Red River, negatively impacting farmers, businesses, emergency responders, and other travelers in the region.

Traill County and Polk County are requesting a BUILD Grant of approximately \$8.7 million, which will be combined with more than \$3.8 million in state and local funding to complete the project.

If funded, the BUILD grant would provide the necessary resources to reconstruct 2.5 miles of Polk County State Aid Highway 1 from the western limits of Nielsville to the east abutment of the newly proposed Nielsville Bridge. In addition, approximately 1,000 feet of Traill County Road 17 consisting of Nielsville Bridge, will be reconstructed in order to meet safety and design requirements. The remaining 9.5 miles of Traill County Road 17 to Traill County Road 81 would be milled and overlaid with bituminous surfacing to strengthen and smooth the roadway providing access to the bridge. Nielsville Bridge, Traill County Road 17, and Polk County State Aid Highway 1 are all crucial in the transportation of agricultural products in the region.

Again, this project retains my full support, and I hope you will consider Traill and Polk Counties' application favorably to assist communities in need. Please feel free to contact Jared Henderson in my office at 202-224-8819 if I can provide any additional information. I would also greatly appreciate if you kept my office informed about the status of this application.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Heidi Heitkamp". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping tail on the final letter.

Heidi Heitkamp  
United States Senate