



NORTH DAKOTA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STATE CAPITOL
600 EAST BOULEVARD
BISMARCK, ND 58505-0360



Representative Rick Holman

District 20
622 153rd Avenue NE
Mayville, ND 58257-9000
Residence: 701-788-2081
Cell: 701-238-1124
rholman@nd.gov

COMMITTEES:
Appropriations

June 29, 2019

Secretary Elaine L. Chao
United States Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590

RE: 2019 BUILD Discretionary Grant Program (Rural Application)

Secretary Chao,

As a member of the North Dakota State Legislature, I, along with other legislators, support the Multi-State Regional Connectivity Project to replace Nielsville Bridge which has been closed since September 14, 2015.

The 700-foot-long bridge, connecting Polk County in Minnesota to Traill County in North Dakota is located just west of Nielsville, MN and east of Buxton, ND. It was closed indefinitely after a 2-by-3-foot hole developed in the bridge deck's eastbound lane. The closure came as Red River Valley farmers whose operations require a safe and accessible way to work on both sides of the Red River were beginning the fall sugar beet harvest. Since then they have been forced to take lengthy detours of 15 miles or longer adding to the cost of their operation and slowing down harvest at a critical time.

Engineering experts have determined that the 78-year-old bridge is beyond repair meaning that replacement is the only option to return to the previous access that it provides. Governments in both North Dakota and Minnesota have stepped up and prepared a 2019 BUILD Grant application to help offset replacement costs. Without a BUILD Grant, building a new bridge is not financially feasible for the rural counties who share this important river crossing. The Nielsville Bridge is one of two structurally deficient bridges that connect the two states. Both cross the Red River connecting Traill and Polk Counties. Neither bridge is wide enough to allow the crossing of modern farm equipment in this agriculture depend area of the two states. Over the past thirty years, this area has switched from producing small grains to corn and soybeans, which as the effect of increasing the amount of product traveling our roads.

Before it was closed, during the harvest season, as many as 500 vehicles per day would travel across the Nielsville Bridge. Replacing this bridge would reestablish this vital economic link for agriculture, agribusinesses, and commerce between the two states, saving time and money for many businesses and farms that operate in this area. Additional project benefits consistent with BUILD 2019 goals include increasing public safety, supporting economic competitiveness, improving quality of life, innovation, and partnership.

Nielsville Bridge is an important transportation infrastructure segment integral to North Dakota and Minnesota. Please consider awarding a BUILD Grant to make this project a reality.

Sincerely,