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May 7, 2020

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

Dear Secretary Chao:

As you review FY 2020 BUILD Grant applications, please consider the Multi-State Regional Connectivity Project to replace Nielsville Bridge 5767.

In 1939, the Nielsville bridge was constructed to span the Red River and connect Minnesota to North Dakota. However, a lack of funding caused structural integrity issues, resulting in the bridge's permanent closure in 2015. When operational, during peak harvest, 500 vehicles traveled Nielsville Bridge per day. This same traffic now faces a rerouting of a minimum of 11 miles, causing considerable delays and straining the region's rural transportation network.

This has a tangible economic impact; area businesses have already reported a 20 to 50 percent drop in sales following the bridge closure. Replacing the bridge would restore a critical economic connection for agriculture, agribusinesses, and commerce between the two states. Moreover, funding this project would increase public safety by restoring mutual aid fire service to the north side of Red River and removing a defunct bridge that poses a potential risk to pedestrians.

Nielsville Bridge is an important transportation corridor to North Dakota and Minnesota. Please give careful review of Polk County's grant application.

Sincerely,



Collin C. Peterson
Member of Congress

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