

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-2310

April 16th, 2020

The Honorable Elaine Chao
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Chao,

On behalf of Polk County, I write in support of their application for FY 2020 Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage (BUILD) Grant. This grant would fund a project to replace the Nielsville Bridge 5767 on the Red River connecting Minnesota and North Dakota. The Multi-State Regional Connectivity Project, formed by Polk County and Traill County in North Dakota, has secured \$3,887,500 in non-federal matching funds.

In 2015, the Nielsville Bridge closed after it was deemed structurally deficient. The bridge plays a significant role for agriculture producers and processors on both sides of the Red River. Transportation of goods, commuters, and emergency response personnel have all been impaired since the permanent closure of this bridge.

Local businesses have reported an alarming drop in revenue ranging from 20-50 percent due to the bridge closure limiting commerce and transportation. Agriculture is the backbone of this region and closing the Nielsville Bridge has increased costs for producers, processors, and all residents dependent on agribusiness.

Rebuilding this bridge would restore a critical economic component for rural communities on both sides of the Red River.

For these reasons, I am proud to support Polk County's application for FY 2020 BUILD Grant funding. If you have any questions or need additional assistance, please contact my staff, Carson Ouellette, carson_ouellette@smith.senate.gov. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Tina Smith
United States Senator