

May 7, 2020

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

Subject: FY 2020 Build Discretionary Grant Program

The Multi-State Regional Connectivity Project is important to the agricultural industry in Minnesota and North Dakota. Minnesota is listed as one of the top five agricultural producing states in the United States, which makes up a third of the US agricultural-output value according to the 2012 Census of Agriculture. The trucking industry carries 70 percent of those agricultural and food products.

The Nielsville bridge is critical to the route used by local farmers and commercial users to transport agricultural commodities to market. I-29 connects the Midwest to Canada where half of the food exports go from Minnesota.

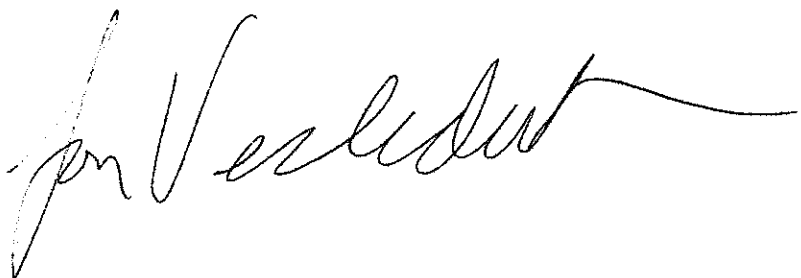
With the bridge closed, the detour route is now 11 miles out of the way, adding additional mileage and causing more wear and tear on the vehicles, while increasing time traveled by operators. Area businesses have also reported a 20-50 percent drop in revenue following the bridge closure, and has caused a significant blow to local agriculture, which is the backbone of the local economy.

The Multi-State Regional Connectivity Project will restore the more efficient route, allowing producers to get their product to market in the most productive manner possible.

This is a significant transportation link for Minnesota and North Dakota. Thank you for your consideration of this project and the efforts brought forth by Polk and Traill Counties.

Sincerely,

West Central Chemical

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jon Verelstout". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.