



# BILLINGS COUNTY

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**Billings County Commission**

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March 24, 2020

The Honorable Elaine Chao  
Secretary of Transportation  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue Southeast  
Washington, DC 20590

RE: FY 2020 Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development Grant Program  
Billings County Little Missouri River Crossing (LMRC) Safety and Mobility Project

Dear Secretary Chao:

Please consider this letter a formal expression of the Billings County Commissioners' full support of the above noted 2020 BUILD application. Billings County is an extremely rural county located in the southwestern corner of North Dakota. The County seat, and only incorporated community in the county is Medora, at the western edge of North Dakota. With the Badlands as its backdrop, Medora and the surrounding area, which includes the Theodore Roosevelt National Park and the Maah Daah Hey Trail, is a busy tourist destination. In addition to tourism, the County is supported primarily through agricultural and oil/gas industry revenues.

The Little Missouri River flows northward through the western portion of the county. In 1959, US Highway 85 was constructed, which provided north-south directional travel in western North Dakota east of the Little Missouri River. Then in 1963 and 1964, a segment of North Dakota's only east-west directional interstate highway (I-94) was constructed on the eastern side of the river. Between 1983 and 1984, ND Highway 16 was constructed, creating the current primary transportation infrastructure for residents and visitors alike.

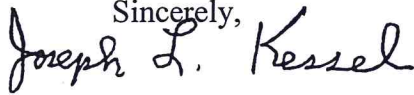
What remains a significant regional concern is the lack of east-west roadway/bridges across the Little Missouri River between I-94 and what is known as the Long X Bridge; the only two legitimate existing east-west crossing points for this river. Although there are a variety of privately-owned fords, these are unreliable and unsafe, often flooding and making them impassable, and requiring private landowner permission. There is approximately 70 miles between I-94 and the Long X Bridge, meaning that agricultural producers, ranchers, tourists, and perhaps most importantly, emergency services personnel, currently must travel significant distances to access the east-west crossings.

The proposed project would construct a new bridge over the river almost exactly halfway between the existing I-94 and Long X Bridge crossings. It would provide a safe, efficient and reliable local and regional connection between the existing roadways on the east and west sides of the river and would improve local connectivity, avenues for commerce, and system linkage between Billings and the neighboring Golden Valley County. It would also provide much needed access for emergency services vehicles and for tourists seeking to enjoy the unique Badlands area residents enjoy every day.

The Billings County Commissioners are in full support of this project and have committed 20 percent match (\$3.2 million) to the request for federal assistance. We believe this project is critical to the ongoing economic sustainability of our region and state and that it provides long needed improvements to the safety of our local, regional and national travelers.

Thank you in advance for your time and your consideration. If you should have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,



Mr. Joseph Kessel  
District 1



Mr. Mike Kasian  
District 2



Mr. Jim Arthaud  
District 3