

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 an expression of our support of the Billings County 2020 BUILD application for the Little Missouri River Crossing Safety and Mobility Project. We represent police, fire and emergency response services in the region and feel strongly this project directly impacts the safety of our transportation system and our ability to respond to emergencies effectively.

We know you are aware that there is significant regional concern related to the lack of east-west roadway/bridges across the Little Missouri River between I-94 and the Long X Bridge; the only two consistently safe 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. Based on our own personal knowledge and experience, we are very aware of the changeable and erratic nature of the Little Missouri River. In the spring, the river tends to run very fast and very full, in many places spreading out over its existing bank. The spring run-off causes serious erosion of the clay/scoria banks; causes temporary dams and backups due to the trees and debris and consequent flooding. The result is often the washing away of whatever "low-water" ford crossings that might have been previously available.

There is approximately 70 miles between I-94 and the Long X Bridge, meaning that during times of spring-run off and other high-river or flooding events, emergency services personnel, currently must travel significant distances to access the east-west crossings in either direction. On multiple occasions when we have received an emergency call for service, the caller cannot identify which side of the river they are calling from, particularly north of Medora. This becomes particularly dangerous when the emergency is during the night and/or during bad weather. We have all personally experienced situations in which we have had to make an educated guess and hope the guess to be correct. If we are wrong, and the caller is on the other side of the river from where we respond, the consequent loss of time creates an obviously dangerous situation and significant loss of time to get to the other side.

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 access for emergency services vehicles. The new bridge as proposed would increase east-west connectivity as well as safety through improved emergency response times.

We support the award of the requested BUILD grant to Billings County and look forward to our continued partnership to make Billings County safe and accessible for all. Thank you for your consideration and time.

Sincerely,



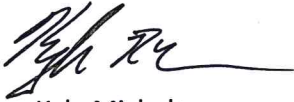
Patrick Rummel
Billings County Sheriff



Kyle Shockley
Billings Country Rural Fire Chief



Mitch Gilseth
Billings County Emergency
Medical Services



Kyle Michels
Billings County Emergency
Medical Services