



Devra Smestad
Auditor/Treasurer

Marisa Haman
Deputy

July 15, 2019

The Honorable Elaine L. Chao
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590-0002

Dear Secretary Chao,

Ward County fully supports the joint application of the City of Minot and the Souris River Joint Board for the 2019 BUILD Transportation Grant related to the 3rd Street Northeast Bridge Reconstruction and Rail Raise project in Minot, North Dakota. This project is a critical component of a multi-jurisdictional effort to replace outdated infrastructure while increasing the resiliency of the community and industry to flooding.

The City of Minot, Souris River Joint Board and BNSF Railway have been coordinating efforts related to holistic flood risk management for approximately two years. In late 2018, the groups began working towards a flood risk management solution which would not only increase the community's resilience to flooding but also increase the resilience of BNSF Railway's Northern Transcon to flooding.

The proposed project, which replaces the 80-year old 3rd Street Northeast Bridge and elevates BNSF Railway infrastructure, will dovetail with the community's flood risk management activities associated with the Mouse River Enhanced Flood Protection Project. The project is also located in the single US Census block in Ward County that has been designated as an Opportunity Zone.

With a single project, the outcomes will be:

- Upgrading aging infrastructure
- Increasing the resilience of a key east-west rail freight corridor, the BNSF Northern Transcon
- Increasing a low to moderate income population's resilience to flooding
- Enhancing safety
- Investing and restoring confidence in an historically underserved area (Opportunity Zone)

The support of the USDOT in achieving the vision of enhanced flood resilience for our community and industry partners is absolutely critical.

Sincerely,

WARD COUNTY, NORTH DAKOTA

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Shelly Wepler". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "S" and "W".

Shelly Wepler

Chair, Ward County Commission