

Testimony of Pat Nygaard, City Council President, City of Jamestown
Senate Budget Committee US Highway 52 Field Hearing
July 2, 2009

Thank you Senator Conrad and also thank you to your fellow committee members for holding this hearing today and for initiating discussion on the importance of U.S. Highway 52. As most of you are probably aware, U.S Highway 52 is a major highway that stretches over 2,000 miles and passes through eleven states. From its point along the U.S / Canadian border at Portal, North Dakota to the Charleston Harbor, in Charleston, South Carolina, this major highway is vitally important, and no where is it more important than here in Jamestown, North Dakota.

U.S. Highway 52 is one of two major highways that intersect Jamestown and Stutsman County, and serves as a critical roadway through our trade area. A significant amount of truck traffic occurs on this roadway. In fact, so many semi trucks utilize this highway that the state of North Dakota constructed a bypass route around the City of Jamestown in 2003. The importance of this highway is evident when you examine the effects it has on the various segments of our local and regional economy. This roadway serves the needs of our major industries, including agriculture, tourism, and manufacturing.

As a major farm to market transportation route, U.S. Highway 52 is utilized by thousands of farmers throughout the year. During the spring of the year, you will see many semi trucks hauling grain from storage bins on the farm to our area elevators. Additionally, you will see air seeders – many manufactured just 35 miles to the east at Valley City’s John Deere plant – making their way up and down this highway. Throughout the summer and fall you will see everything from spraying & tillage equipment, combines, tractors & semis moving back and forth along this highway. During critical times of the year, U.S. Highway 52 becomes even more important, as weight limit restrictions prevent farmers from hauling grain on our county roadways. U.S. Highway 52 makes a great deal of this possible for our area farmers, so that they may continue to contribute to the agriculture industry, a vitally important sector of our local economy and the largest sector of our state’s economy.

While not to the level of Medora and the badlands of western North Dakota, tourism does hold an important role in our local economy. Every year, thousands of tourists visit the Frontier Village and National Buffalo Museum, home to the world’s largest buffalo and two rare albino

buffalo named White Cloud and Dakota Miracle. Additionally, Jamestown lays claim to being home to perhaps the greatest western novelist of all-time, Louis L'Amour. This alone brings additional tourism opportunities to our area. Also, being the rural state that we are, many people visit our region each year to fish our area lakes and take advantage of our excellent hunting opportunities. Whatever their reason to visit Jamestown and our surrounding area, many of these individuals arrive here by way of U.S. Highway 52.

While the manufacturing sector has been hard hit in many areas of our country over the last decade, Jamestown manufacturers continue to succeed, and collectively they employ a significant number of people in Jamestown and the surrounding area. Goodrich, a cargo system manufacturer, employs over 500 people. Cavendish, a potato processing plant, employs approximately 250 people. Duratech Industries, an ag equipment manufacturer, employs over 100 people. Agri-Cover, a manufacturer of tonneau covers for pickups and grain trucks, employs over 100 people. Newman Signs, the manufacturer of those highway billboards you saw on your way into Jamestown, employs over 100 people. All of these companies receive raw materials and ship their finished goods via our major roadways, including U.S. Highway 52. In the case of Agri-Cover, they are a small town success story. This company started in the little town of Kensal, located in Northeast Stutsman County, but the company founders realized that to ensure long-term success, they needed to relocate their company closer to a major transportation route. Their choice was to relocate the company just north of Jamestown, along U.S. Highway 52. In my opinion, this is clear and convincing evidence of the important role this highway plays in our local and regional economy. Two expansions and 100+ employees later, Agri-Cover is a thriving company and wonderful employer.

Whether it is agriculture, tourism, or manufacturing, you can see that this highway is critical to each. Given the important role this highway plays in each of these sectors, our federal lawmakers should continue to place a high priority on U.S. Highway 52 and make the infrastructure investments necessary to keep this a viable and structurally sound roadway.

Thank you.