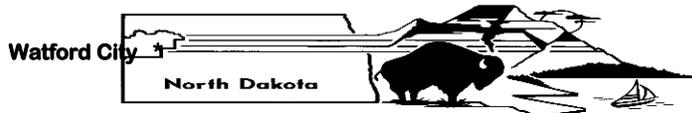


# **McKenzie County**



## **Tourism Bureau**

**City of Watford City**  
**Kent Pelton, Mayor**  
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Watford City, ND 58854

**Statement of Kent Pelton, Mayor of Watford City, North Dakota**  
**United States Senate Committee on the Budget**  
**June 1, 2010**

Senator Conrad and congressional staff members. I want to thank you for bringing this Congressional Budget hearing to Watford City and giving me the opportunity to testify regarding the importance of transportation infrastructure to the communities along the Highway 85 corridor.

In September of 2008, Senator Conrad spent the afternoon with us, discussing the many concerns that we have in western North Dakota. The issue of Highway funding was a major concern then and is even more so today with the additional traffic, especially with the increase of large tankers and semi trailers.

My name Kent Pelton, I proudly serve as Mayor of Watford City. For 33 years I served as a Vocational Agricultural Instructor at our High School. Currently, I acquire Surface Use Agreements for well sites, pipelines and access road here in the Williston Basin and drive Highway 85 several times each week.

It is interesting to note that today's topic focuses on transportation of goods and services along a corridor that brought the first settlers to this community. The Long X Ranch, the largest and most famous cattle ranch in McKenzie County, is synonymous with cattle drives and the era of open range in Dakota Territory.

In their quest for grazing land, the Reynolds brothers drove their first herds from Texas north toward Montana in the spring of 1884. Hearing reports of "stirrup high" grass, the brothers moved their

4,000 Longhorns into the Badlands of North Dakota. This is said to be the first herd of Longhorns in the area. The Reynolds established a ranch in the mid-1880s, southwest of here, near the North Unit of Theodore Roosevelt National Park. By 1888, the Reynolds were bringing three herds a year into Dakota Territory. They named their ranch for the official brand, the "Long X" which was one of the first two brands recorded in North Dakota. Much of the Long X Ranch is now part of the North Unit of Theodore Roosevelt National Park. The name and history of the Long X lives on through the U.S. Highway 85 Bridge over the Little Missouri.

The Highway 85 corridor which includes the Theodore Roosevelt Expressway connects many of US Histories most notable names. Lewis and Clark, Theodore Roosevelt, Sitting Bull and George Armstrong Custer are synonymous with western North and South Dakota. This corridor brings tourists along the Theodore Roosevelt Expressway from Mount Rushmore in the Black Hills to Theodore Roosevelt National Park and the historic sites along the confluence of the Missouri River and Yellowstone, where Lewis and Clark left in search of a passage to the ocean and where Sitting Bull surrendered.

Today, the region is home to what the U.S. Geological Survey called "the largest continuous oil accumulation it has ever assessed." With 4.35 billion barrels of recoverable oil in place, the Bakken is a huge play for domestic oil companies and individual investors. Geologists and oil industry officials are saying we may have a "second Bakken" that could literally double the Bakken's already-prolific output, the Three Forks - Sanish oil formation lying directly underneath the Bakken.

Daily production from Bakken wells in the Williston basin exceeds 270,000 barrels of oil from over 4500 wells. The Basin has over 100 rigs searching for oil today and the highway system supports of 300 oil service companies and crew transports in the basin. Theodore Roosevelt Expressway provides a transportation corridor for oil rigs, pipe, steel and supplies from Edmonton, Calgary, Alberta to the North and Houston, Dallas and Denver from the south. The highway allows the movement of oil and gas from wells to collection points,

and then on to processing facilities located either instate or out-of-state. Exploration and extraction technologies use specialized equipment and services, many of which are not available in North Dakota and must be purchased from out-of-state sources

While oil operators represent a mix of small to large firms, a majority of the prominent oil operators in North Dakota also have operations in other states. TRE is a collector corridor for six major east-west highway systems that service major oil development areas.

Production agriculture serves as the third leg to the economy of the region. Trucks transporting spring wheat, durum, feeder cattle and a host of other agricultural raw products to other states and countries making this region a primary exporter of American foodstuffs. The Mon Dak region continues to diversify its agricultural production to ag processing and shipping.

What does this mean for Highway 85 and the Theodore Roosevelt Expressway?

It means the existing highway system that was built to support small farms moving grain in single axle trucks to market and the station wagon taking the family on a daily outing is being asked to support an industry using tankers and semi-trailers with multiple wheels to transport goods. The Long X Bridge south of Watford City has become a bottleneck to traffic moving over height equipment to the oil fields. North Dakota officials issued over 26,000 overweight or over height permits on roadways in and along Highway 85 in 2009 compared to 10,700 in 2005. Over 5,100 permits have been issued this year which could put 2010 totals over 60,000. Tanker trucks hauling crude and water up the steep grades in the badlands are laboring in front of RV's and cyclists on the way to visit our national parks and tourism sites.

Also, narrow shoulders and unstable weather combined with heavy equipment and increased speeds have places the infrastructure in jeopardy and have created safety issues for our citizens and workers.

**In closing, I want to thank you for the support given on past highway projects in North Dakota. A perfect example of this is the 4-Bears Bridge on the Missouri River near New Town. What a difference this bridge makes for our community and everyone in the Williston Basin.**

**On behalf of the city, I want to thank you for holding this Congressional Budget Hearing in Watford City and urge you to continue supporting the upgrade of Highway 85 and the Theodore Roosevelt Expressway.**