

**Statement of Francis Ziegler  
Director, North Dakota Department of Transportation  
Before the  
Committee on the Budget, United States Senate  
on  
“Transportation Infrastructure’s Role in Economic Growth  
Along the North Dakota State Highway 13 Corridor”  
Wahpeton, North Dakota, August 18, 2010**

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Mr. Chairman:

Good Morning. I am Francis Ziegler, Director of the North Dakota Department of Transportation (NDDOT). Thank you for the opportunity to appear before the Committee today and thanks for your interest and support for improving transportation in North Dakota.

Transportation is vitally important to supporting our country’s economic competitiveness and our state’s economic growth. It is also crucial to moving freight, connecting manufacturers to retailers, farms to markets, shippers to railroads, airports, and seaports, and motorists to jobs, schools, and stores.

This year the NDDOT has undertaken the largest construction program in the history of the department, approximately \$450 million in projects on nearly 2,000 miles of roadway statewide. This includes projects under the regular federal program, stimulus (AARA), emergency relief, and state funding.

Today, I’d like to address the State Highway 13 Corridor, challenges facing North Dakota’s transportation system, and the need for a long term federal transportation bill that serves North Dakota and the Nation.

**North Dakota State Highway 13 Corridor**

State Highway 13 is the major east-west corridor serving the southeastern part of North Dakota. This corridor links agriculture producers with value added processing facilities such as ProGold near Wahpeton and manufacturing facilities such as Bobcat in Gwinner.

The Department recognizes the importance of the ND 13 corridor (183 miles) between ND 1804 east to the Minnesota border. From 1999 to 2009, approximately \$43.7 million was invested in preserving and improving 163 miles of this corridor.

In 2009, the average annual daily traffic on ND 13 was just over 1100 vehicles per day. This ranges from a low of 230 vehicles near ND 1804 to just over 12,700 vehicles at the Minnesota border. The average truck traffic is about 170 trucks per day with a low of 30 trucks at the west end of the corridor to about 780 trucks on the east end of the corridor.

The combined average annual daily traffic volume on the east and west bound lanes between I-29 and the Minnesota border was just over 6,100 vehicles per day. This ranges from a low of 3,655 just east of I-29 to a high of just over 12,700 near the Minnesota border. The average truck traffic per day on this segment is about 650, ranging from a low of 460 to a high of 780 trucks per day.

There are about \$41 million worth of projects scheduled on ND 13 for the years 2010 to 2014. This summer you can see the Dakota Avenue project being completed in Wahpeton. Attachment 1 shows the location of the projects. Emphasis will be on preventative maintenance activities to protect our investment in this corridor.

### **North Dakota's Transportation System Challenges**

The NDDOT and the Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute (UGPTI) recently held public input meetings across the state to discuss transportation issues. Input from those meetings indicates that:

- Residents want more transportation infrastructure across the state.
- Public expectations are growing – for load carrying capacity, increased shoulder width and passing lanes- and some want more four lane roads.

The NDDOT's most critical challenges are:

1. Providing a transportation system to move commodities year round.
  - The NDDOT utilizes load restrictions to reduce damage to roadways caused by heavy loads at a time of the year when highway pavements are most vulnerable, typically during the spring of the year. Load restrictions add to the cost of doing business.
  - Farmers incur additional transportation costs as they must detour around the load restrictions or make more trips via the same route with reduced loads. It costs about \$4.00 per loaded mile to ship a five-axle semi that is fully loaded. For example, to ship a load of corn 75 miles to the ProGold Plant it would cost about \$300. If the same amount of product was shipped on road with a 6-ton load restriction it would cost about 1.62 times as much or \$486.
2. Adding grade raises in the Devils Lake area and the prairie pothole region.
  - Eighteen projects are currently planned from 2010 – 2012 in the Devils Lake Basin at an estimated cost of \$168.4 million. Upon completion of these projects the roadways will be raised to an elevation of 1460 feet.
  - As a result of recent heavy rains, 22 sites on state highways in the prairie pothole region were, or are close to being, inundated with water. There are four sites where the water has run over the roadway and they qualify for emergency relief (ER) funding. It is estimated to cost about \$3.9 million to raise the grade at these sites. There are 16 additional sites where the water is close to the edge of the driving lane. It is estimated to cost about \$24.1 million to raise these 16 sites to five feet above the water level. Unfortunately these 16 sites are not eligible for ER funding under the present criteria. We would appreciate obtaining ER eligibility based on the three-foot freeboard criteria used in the Devils Lake basin.

3. Due to the aging of the state's transportation system the Department has had to move to a preventative maintenance program. Preventative maintenance reduces shoulder width and the ability to continue such a program. Load capacity and ride will further deteriorate without widening many miles of road in the future.
4. Funding - The most recent multi-year federal transportation bill expired September 30, 2009. Since then, Congress has passed a series of short-term extensions. This situation results in considerable uncertainty as we attempt to prepare our budget and do long-range planning. We would appreciate a long term transportation bill that is good for North Dakota enacted as soon as possible. However, if there are to be further extensions, they should be for at least a year, to help states and industry plan and implement programs and projects.

### **Long Term Federal Legislation to Reauthorize Highway and Transportation Programs**

A reauthorization proposal is pending in the House authorizing committee. The NDDOT and other rural states in the Midwest have several concerns with the proposal:

1. It would create a large new program funding only metro areas with a population of 500,000 or more, provide significant funding for large nationally significant projects, a high speed rail program and infrastructure banks, all of which are geared to assist the large urban states.
2. It reduces the proportion of overall program funding for the highway portion of the program. It provides a significant increase in the share of overall funding to transit, relative to highways. While we support transit, we believe the current ration of funding for roads and bridges to transit should remain the same.
3. It would give increased emphasis to discretionary and non-formula programs compared to formula funds. We do not support funding new large discretionary programs, particularly programs that are not accessible to North Dakota.
4. We are concerned that the House legislation could provide North Dakota with a considerable reduced share of overall funding compared to current law.

To offset some of the proposals in the House, we are pleased that bipartisan rural mobility legislation, S. 3485, was recently introduced by you, Mr. Chairman, Senator Barrasso, and 11 other Senators. That legislation basically takes the position that if new legislation is to dedicate significant highway program funding only for large metropolitan areas, the legislation must also include a counterpart program of funding for rural states.

### **The Next Highway Reauthorization Legislation Should:**

- Provide a long-term balanced bill and funding that addresses rural as well as metropolitan needs.
- Increase the overall size of the federal highway program to address growing needs and counteract the impacts of highway construction inflation.

- Provide for rural states like North Dakota to participate at least proportionally in any growth of the overall federal highway and transportation program, both as to formula and other funds.
- Continue to provide funding for the entire federal-aid system, not just the National Highway System.
- Allocate a higher percentage of the overall program through the formula process rather than through discretionary or allocation programs.
- Maintain the funding ratio for the highway (not including NHTSA and FMCA) and transit programs at 4:1.
- Streamline the program and project delivery process.
- Provide flexibility to rural states and communities to pursue solutions that are practical to them if programs to advance livability, complete streets, and climate change are implemented.

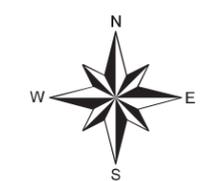
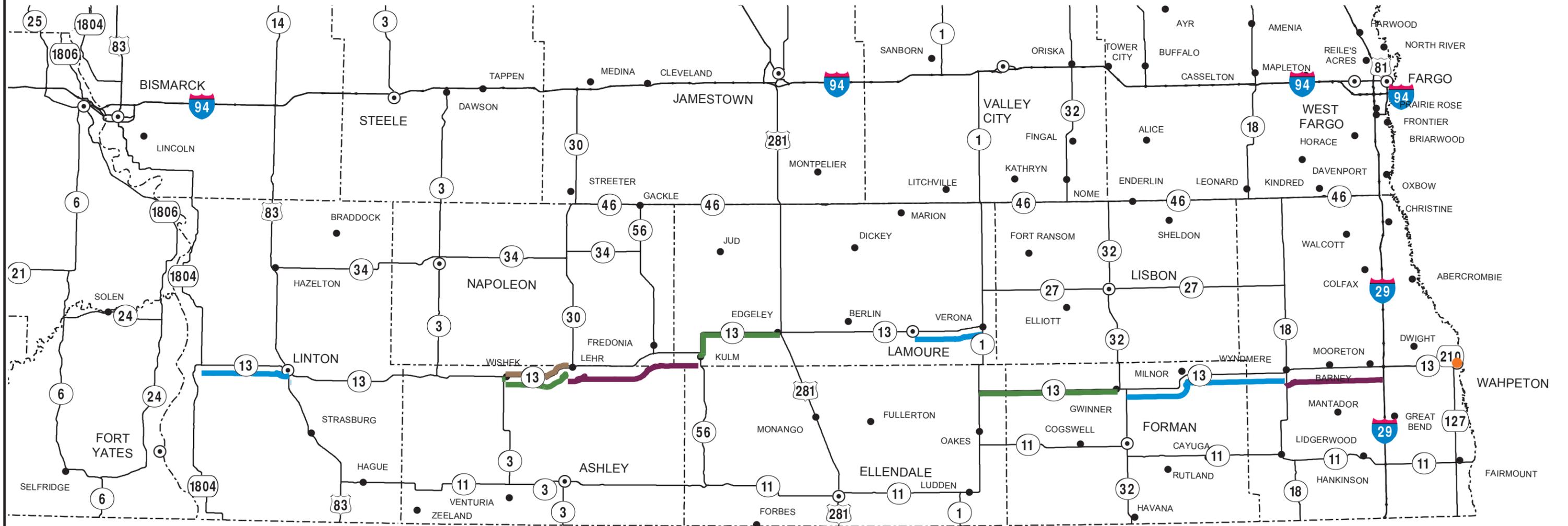
### **Conclusion**

It is essential for Congress to recognize that increased federal investment in highways and surface transportation for Rural States is important to the national interest. This increased federal investment is important to all fifty State Transportation Departments that deal with safely moving people and goods.

That concludes my testimony. I'll be happy to respond to any questions.

# 2010-14 STIP Construction Program Highway 13 Corridor (Pending Federal Funds)

- Major Rehab
- Minor Rehab
- Thin Lift Overlay/  
Preventive Maintenance
- Seal Coat
- Structure
- Municipal



STATE OF  
NORTH DAKOTA  
PREPARED BY THE  
NORTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
PLANNING & PROGRAMMING DIVISION  
IN COOPERATION WITH THE  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION

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