

**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 US 12 and US 85 in North Dakota,**  
**Bowman, North Dakota, August 24, 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, farmers to markets, shippers to railroads, airports, seaports; and motorists to jobs, schools, and stores.

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

Today, I’d like to address the US Highway 12 and US 85 Corridors, 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 Highway US 12 and US 85 Corridors**

US Highway 12 and US Highway 85 are essential transportation corridors serving the southwestern part of North Dakota. The tables below illustrate annual traffic counts for US 12 and US 85. North Dakota Highway 23 counts are included for comparison.

**TABLE 1 – Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) count for all types of vehicles**

Highway	Location	Year	Average AADT	High* AADT	Low AADT	% Growth 2006-2009
US 12	Montana border to SD line	2009	958	3780	630	6%
US 85	SD line to I 94	2009	1302	3758	1110	7%
US 85	I 94 to Watford City	2009	1748	4210	1385	15%
US 85	Watford City to Williston	2009	2828	4335	2490	22%
ND 23	Watford City to ND 1804	2009	2304	6460	1270	70%
ND 23	ND 1804 to US Hwy 83	2009	2095	7300	1268	31%

*\*The High AADT reflects traffic volumes that occur within or adjacent to local cities and towns.*

**TABLE 2 – Truck Annual Average Daily Traffic (TAADT) count**

Highway	Location	Year	Average TAADT	High* TAADT	Low TAADT	% Growth 2006-2009
US 12	Montana border to SD line	2009	184	680	120	22%
US 85	SD line to I 94	2009	268	433	223	15%
US 85	I 94 to Watford City	2009	456	990	395	43%
US 85	Watford City to Williston	2009	713	890	675	40%
ND 23	Watford City to ND 1804	2009	625	880	70	274%
ND 23	ND 1804 to US Hwy 83	2009	369	920	218	167%

*\*The High TAADT reflects traffic volumes that occur within or adjacent to local cities and towns.*

The Department recognizes the importance of US 12. From 1999 to 2009, approximately \$46 million was invested in preserving and improving this corridor.

The Department also recognizes the importance of US 85. From 1999 to 2009, approximately \$34 million was invested in US 85 from the South Dakota border to US 2, and \$4.4 million from US 2 to the Canadian border.

To improve traffic flow, enhance safety and preserve the system, a variety of construction projects will be undertaken over the next few years. Attachment 1 shows project locations for US 12 and US 85 for the years 2010-2014.

- We have approximately \$32.5 million worth of projects scheduled on US 12, including a major rehabilitation project taking place this summer from Rhame to the Montana line.
- There are about \$75 million worth of projects scheduled on US 85.
  - Improvements for Highway 85, working toward the Super 2 highway concept include:
    - Adding a three-lane section which includes intermittent left and right turning lanes from US Highway 2 to the Missouri River.
    - Adding several turning lanes at numerous intersections between ND Highway 200 and the Missouri River.
    - Re-grading and adding a climbing lane south of the Long X Bridge.
    - Adding multiple passing lanes between Watford City and Williston.
  - Additional projects on US 85 include:
    - Thin lift overlay from Bowman to the South Dakota border.
    - Slurry Seal = 9.7 Miles N of Amidon
    - Structure Repairs south of the I-94 junction.

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

The Department and 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.
- Residents are concerned about increased traffic, especially in the oil impact areas in western North Dakota.

- Public expectations are growing – for load carrying capacity, increased shoulder width and passing lanes. Over the past few years we've had received increased requests to four lane roadways such as 85, 281, 52 and 23.

The Department's most critical challenges are:

1. Providing a transportation system to move commodities year round.
  - The Department 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 wheat 75 miles from near Hettinger to the Gladstone elevator, it would cost about \$300. If the same amount of product was shipped on the same route 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 1,460 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 provided authorizations only through 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 enactment of a long term transportation bill that is good for North Dakota 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 have concerns with the proposal, including:

1. It would create a large new program, funding only metro areas with a population of 500,000 or more, provide 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 ratio 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 considerably reduced share of overall funding compared to current law.

By contrast, 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.

Clearly, our ability to continue to invest in surface transportation infrastructure in North Dakota will depend in part on Federal surface transportation funding levels. The needs are there to justify increased investment. Senator as indicated before, the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) has gone on record recommending, for the six-year period 2010-2015, proportional increases in the highway and transit programs over the prior six years -- to \$375 billion and \$93 billion, respectively -- plus funding for other programs.

Unfortunately, federal revenue coming into the federal highway trust fund has been declining. Currently, the federal highway trust fund brings in about \$31 billion in revenue annually, but has approximately \$42 billion in expenditures. There are several reasons for the reduction in revenue going into the trust fund.

1. Higher fuel prices in 2008 resulted in an increased use in mass transit in the urban areas. Many of these individuals continue to use transit.
2. The economic downturn of our nation's economy has impacted highway travel. For example, travel in the United States declined by approximately 108 billion vehicle miles from 2007 to 2008.
3. The increased overall fuel efficiency of vehicles. Although increased fuel efficiencies have positive environmental impacts and reduce our dependence on foreign oil, it has a negative impact on motor fuel tax collections.

4. The increased use of hybrid and electric vehicles. There currently is no mechanism in place for collecting federal user fees on electric cars or vehicles that run on hydrogen.

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

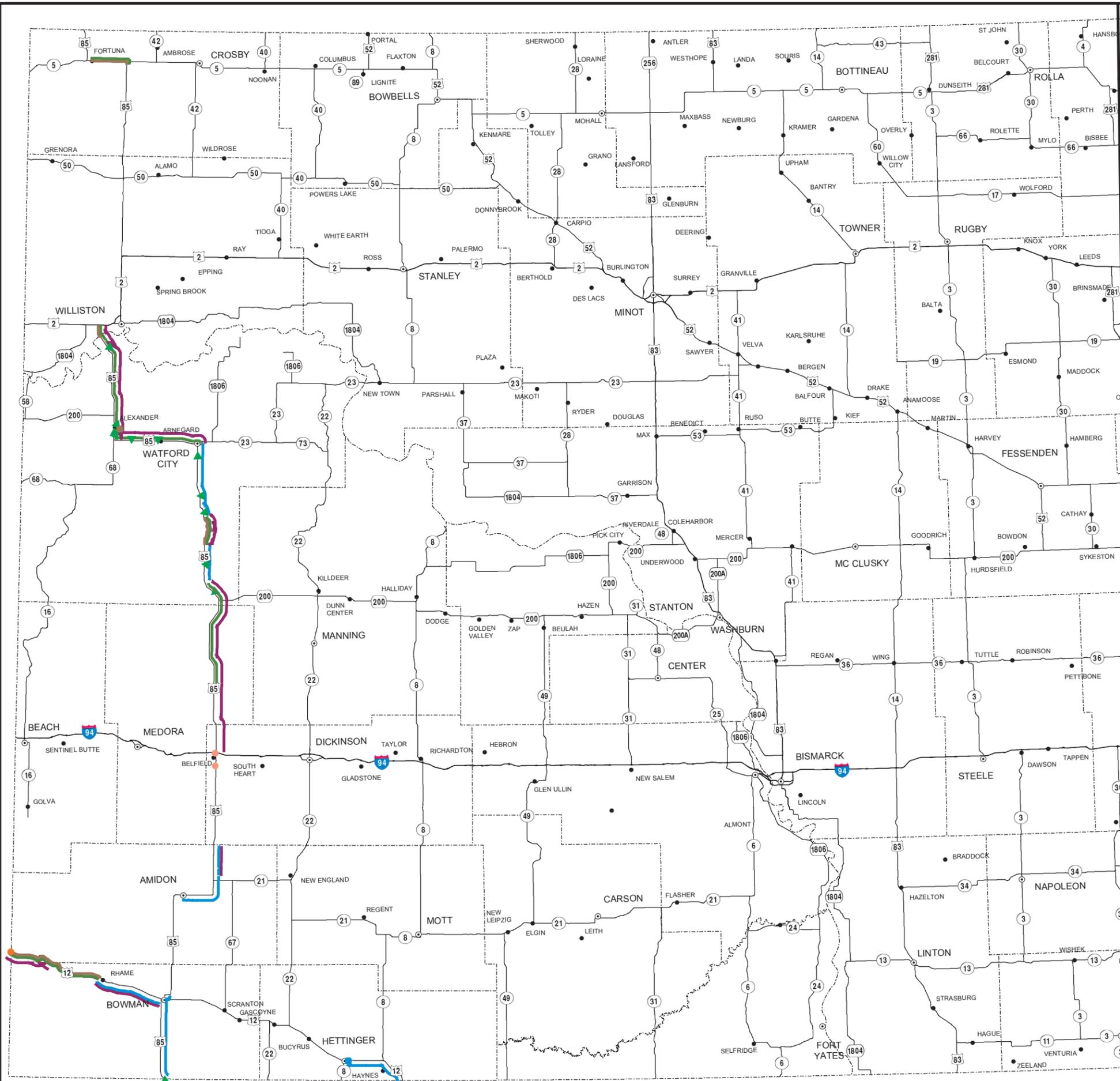
- Provide a long-term balanced bill and funding that addresses rural as well as metropolitan needs.
- Increase the overall size of the federal highway program to address growing needs and counteract the impacts of highway construction inflation.
- Provide for rural states, like North Dakota, to participate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

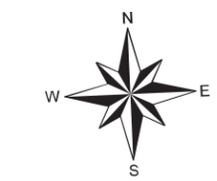
It is essential for Congress to recognize that increased federal investment in highways and surface transportation in rural states is important to the national interest. This increased federal investment is important to all fifty state transportation departments that deal with safely moving people and goods.

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

# 2010-14 STIP Construction Program Dickinson and Williston Districts (Pending Federal Funds) Highways 12 and 85



-  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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