

Senators Conrad and Gregg:

Thank you for this opportunity to speak on behalf of the people of our region regarding the importance of Highway 85 to our communities.

My name is Brent Sanford. I am on the panel today representing Watford City and McKenzie County as a local business owner and as the City Council President for Watford City. I was born and raised in Watford City, the county seat of McKenzie County which is directly to the south of Williston along Highway 85. I graduated from the University of North Dakota and lived and worked as a CPA in Fargo, ND, Phoenix, AZ and Denver, CO. In 2004, my wife and I decided to move home and become the 3rd generation owner of S&S Motors, a 60 year old automobile dealership. My grandfather started the business in 1946 when he returned home from serving in the Navy during World War II. He owned the business for 28 years, then my father owned the business for 30 years. The faces and franchises have changed over the years, but one thing has stayed the same. Our main customers are dryland farmers, ranchers, oilfield service companies, utility companies and their employees. Another thing has stayed the same. Highway 85 is the only way the people of Watford City receive their goods and services. With no rail and no major airport, every kernel of wheat and every calf are hauled out by truck and every egg and strawberry, every nut, bolt and 2x4 are hauled in by truck. If you drove to this meeting along highway 85 today, it probably wouldn't surprise you that the grocery stores in Watford City suffer from extreme produce losses compared to their competitors along interstate highways. But people from McKenzie County don't dwell on it. We make due with what we have. People will tell you that "the road is fine the way it is" and it helps "keep the riff-raff out". We are an independent, hearty people whose grandparents crossed the Missouri River and hauled their children over the bluffs and prairies to homestead where there were no roads and no railroads. We are used to solving problems and challenges ourselves. But with oil and clean water supply tightening worldwide, other people may be interested in what we have here. We can grow food without irrigation and we have some of the best oil reserves in the US. So our narrow, bumpy, pot-holed Highway 85 has become the concern of others from outside of our county.

In western North Dakota we share the same concerns with the rest of the Highway 85 corridor from West Texas through New Mexico, Oklahoma, Kansas, Nebraska, Colorado, South Dakota, Wyoming and Montana. These 10 states make up the energy and agricultural production center of our nation. We share common characteristics in the sizes of our towns, the types of people living in our communities, the ways we make our living and the types of goods we produce. We also share a common bond in that we are the forgotten region in regard to interstate transportation. You can go 300 miles east or west to reach a north-south running interstate highway system in many parts of the Highway 85 corridor. This commonality has resulted in the alliance of three highway associations -- the Theodore Roosevelt Expressway from North and South Dakota, The Heartland Expressway of Nebraska and the Ports to Plains Alliance of Texas to Colorado. We are hoping our combined voice and unified vision will help to bring attention to the challenges we face conducting our lives and our business along our existing highways. We also hope our combined voice and vision can bring to light the importance of the Ag and Energy corridor and help convince congress that development of our own ag production and our own energy production is of vital national importance.

As a sidenote, I was an active observer of the Highway 85 problem on my last career stop before returning home to North Dakota. The last position I held before returning home to Watford City was as the Chief Financial Officer for Transwest Trucks in Commerce City, CO. My office overlooked the busy, divided 4-lanes of Highway 85 as it entered the Denver metro area from the northeast. People's lives are affected every day by the bottleneck of traffic fighting through the middle of Denver as highway 85 converges with I-25. The normal course of commerce in the entire west central region of the US from Salt Lake City to Kansas City is hampered and disrupted by the lack of a seamless north-south route through eastern Colorado away from I-25. While living and working in Colorado, the importance of moving Highway 85 to the east of Denver became very apparent to me.

The people here today from the North Dakota DOT, the Ports to Plains Alliance, and the Theodore Roosevelt Expressway have a storehouse full of information and statistics on what type of traffic is

currently moving up and down our disjointed north-south roads in the Highway 85 corridor. Although the existing levels of traffic warrant discussion and consideration for infrastructure improvements, when planning the next highway bill, I would urge you to have the vision of what could be moving over an improved north-south highway system. I would urge you to hold the vision of wind turbines and drilling rigs being safely transported down four lane highways rather than limping down pot-holed two lane highways with no shoulders. I would urge you to hold the vision of the thriving communities along the interstate highway system adjacent to I-25 in northern Colorado like Windsor, Fort Collins, Loveland, Longmont and Westminster as opposed to the dying communities along Highway 85 only 10-20 miles away running parallel to I-25 in Northern Colorado and Eastern Wyoming. I would urge you to envision a vibrant Highway 85 Ag and Energy Corridor up and down the center of our country as visionary leaders did when developing the east-west routes of the federal rail system and federal interstate highway systems. We need the support of congress in this endeavor. This is larger than individual states and individual counties. We're asking for visionary leadership from you.

Thank you.