

# United States Senate

July 3, 2018

The Honorable Elaine L. Chao  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, S.E.  
Washington, D.C. 20590

Re: BUILD Grant for Toston Bridge

Dear Secretary Chao:

I write in strong support of the application by the Montana Department of Transportation for a Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) grant to replace two Toston bridge structures over the Missouri River and Montana Rail Link (MRL) rail line.

This project is an important transportation infrastructure priority for Montana – both in terms of addressing deteriorating structures as well as enhancing public safety. The existing structures are not only narrow, they have substandard curves that are outdated. The structure over the railroad, which has not been improved since the 1950s, is designated “fracture critical” which requires monitoring on a three-month cycle. The corridor has higher-than-average crash and crash severity rates.

In order to address these safety hazards, the State of Montana has already invested \$100 million in highway-widening projects on each side of the bridge, done as part of a broader environmental analysis from Townsend to Three Forks. Additionally, Montana will contribute further resources towards refurbishing and upgrading state transportation infrastructure. An awarded BUILD grant would allow Montana to complete a larger corridor plan in rural Montana, which will increase the capacity to a modern bridge with wide shoulders, remove a major choke point, and improve Highway 287 between Helena and Three Forks.

Investment in this project is exactly what the BUILD program aspires to achieve—to revitalize surface transportation systems that will result in significant and lasting local and/or regional impacts. Awarding a BUILD grant for this project will spur the local transportation economy, expedite the shipment of agriculture and other commodities, facilitate tourism, create jobs and improve safety.

Thank you for your due consideration of this exemplary project. If I can provide any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me. I would ask that my office be informed of the eventual decision regarding this application.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jon Tester". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping initial "J" and a long horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

Jon Tester