

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 Kalispell Bypass

Dear Secretary Chao:

I write to lend my strong support for the grant application which seeks BUILD funding to complete the southern half of the Kalispell Bypass in rural northwest Montana.

In 1994, recognizing the potential future growth in the region and accompanying increased traffic, city and regional planners outlined a strategy to facilitate the flow of traffic in the Flathead Valley area by proposing to create a bypass roadway both north and south of Kalispell to eliminate bottlenecks and to ease congestion. While the envisioned bypass to the north has been completed, a comparable four-lane bypass to the south of Kalispell has not. And today, the need is greater than ever.

Over the past two decades, increased usage of the area's roadways has exploded. Moreover, with Glacier National Park nearby, this region faces annually a rapid influx of visitors. Just last year, visitors to Glacier National Park totaled more than three million people – roughly three times the population of the entire state of Montana. In July 2017 alone, a million people visited the national park.

Completing the four-lane southern bypass is critical for smooth and safe passage in and around this rural area. It is critical for local businesses writ large and for a strong tourism sector in particular. It will foster private investment in Kalispell's downtown core area. It will boost the efficient movement of goods and services within the region and to external markets. It will fortify the inherent safety of the region's transportation network.

For these reasons, this project enjoys wide and deep support. To date, over 500 businesses, government officials and agencies and individual stakeholders within the region and beyond have endorsed this project. Your support of the Kalispell Bypass would result in key enhancements to the transportation network in the Flathead Valley and improve transportation throughout Montana's rural northwest region.

Thank you for you and your staff considering the Kalispell Bypass for a BUILD grant. If I or my office can provide any 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, appearing to read "Jon Tester". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Jon Tester