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October 10, 2017

The Honorable Elaine Chao
Secretary of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave. SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Chao,

Please accept this letter in support for the Maine Department of Transportation's Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER IX) grant application to repair three highway bridges in two neighboring rural counties in central Maine.

As you are aware, the State of Maine has unique infrastructure challenges due to its geography, weather and population density. Geographically, Maine is one of the most rural states in the country. The rural nature of the state makes reliable transportation infrastructure critical for people to get to and from work, go to school, shop and access health care centers. This TIGER IX project will repair two (2) highway bridges in Penobscot County and one (1) bridge in Piscataquis County. The bridges are the Mattawamkeag Bridge #2522 in the Town of Mattawamkeag, the West Branch Bridge #3666 in T3 Indian Purchase Twp. and the Pleasant River Bridge #3244 in the Town of Milo. All three bridges are critical to the residents in these areas for access to I-95 heading North or South, and to access other parts of the state via state and local roads. One of these bridges, if closed, would cause users to detour approximately 100 miles. This is clearly an unacceptable option for both residents traveling for work or pleasure and truck drivers moving freight through the state and into Canada. If these bridges are not rehabilitated, this region of the Northeast will see a further decline in financial opportunities.

We are pleased that Maine DOT is seeking assistance from the US Department of Transportation to repair this quickly declining bridge infrastructure. We strongly believe that this region of the country cannot be competitive on a regional, national or global scale if the highway corridors are not upgraded to ensure resiliency and reliability. The declining condition of these bridges reduces the quality of life for the residents and works to further expand the rural opportunity gap experienced in this area of Maine.

Therefore, we respectfully request that you please consider funding these very important projects fully in this 9th round of TIGER funding. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,


Peter K. Baldacci, Chairman


Thomas J. Davis, Jr.


Laura J. Sanborn