

<<Jurisdiction/Agency Letterhead>>

May 13, 2020

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

Dear Secretary Chao,

The South Dakota Railroad Board is pleased to support the Roberts County, South Dakota sponsored Sisseton Milbank Railroad Modernization Project application to the United States of America's Department of Transportation's BUILD grant program. This critical project will replace 1880's manufactured steel rails with new United States manufactured rail over the 37 miles this short line freight railroad uses to serve the rural region of northeast South Dakota.

This 37 mile rail line is a vital link to the US freight rail network, providing competitive freight rail options for northeast South Dakota. In addition to the agricultural producers that depend on this rail line, an additional opportunity exists for reduced delivered propane costs via freight rail that will enable the Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate community to take advantage of the economic opportunities this rail upgrade would provide. The current freight rail infrastructure that operates on the 1880's vintage rail precludes marketing propane by rail.

Roberts County and the Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate jointly promote economic development in this very rural and economically stressed area of northeast South Dakota, and by the US DOT approving of this grant proposal, it will greatly enhance the ability of our joint initiatives to attract economic development to this stressed rural area

The long-planned Sisseton to Milbank Railroad Reconstruction project advances the goals of the United States Federal Railroad Administration approved 2014 South Dakota State Rail Plan (see page 21, Map ID number 18) and will enable safe freight rail transportation with higher gross weight on rail (286,000 pounds) in this corridor.

This project will benefit the Interstate highway freight network with the proximity of the rail line with Interstate Highway 29, enabling connectivity and creation of a rail to truck or truck to rail transload in the Sisseton area to meet the priority objectives of the DOT's funding programs by emphasizing highway safety, state of good repair for highway infrastructure, and local and regional economic competitiveness and vitality by moving a preponderance of the truck mileage serving this region to freight rail mileage.

The South Dakota Railroad Board endorses and supports Roberts County's application for the Sisseton Milbank Railroad Modernization BUILD grant application!

Sincerely,

Jerry Cope
Chairman
The South Dakota Railroad Board and Railroad Authority

Members

Jeffrey Burket, Vice Chair, Spearfish, SD
Gregory Carmon, Operation of Rail Service, Brandon, SD
Gary Doering, Finance, Cavour, SD
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