
**Testimony of
Matt Perdue
North Dakota Farmers Union
Before the
House Appropriations Committee
January 18, 2023**

Chairman Vigesaa and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill No. 1147. My name is Matt Perdue, and I am testifying on behalf of North Dakota Farmers Union’s members.

During NDFU’s most recent annual convention, our members adopted a special order of business outlining our priorities for this legislative session. Included in that list of priorities is funding for rural roads and bridges. Having a strong rural transportation network is critical to farmers’ and ranchers’ ability to access the market.

According to the Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute (UGPTI), 698 county, township and tribal bridges need to be replaced in the next 20 years. The cost of those replacements and additional bridge maintenance totals \$716 million over the 20-year period. Because many of those projects are urgent needs, UGPTI’s analysis calls for \$139 million per biennium for each of the next five biennia.¹

NDFU appreciates the important steps the legislature took to address our rural infrastructure challenges during the 2021 legislative session and special session. However, without significant, routine investments in bridges, we will continue to fall behind. Despite the legislature’s generous support in recent years, our estimated bridge needs grew by \$216 million over the last biennium.² HB 1147 is the solution we need to get ahead of the growing backlog of county and township bridge improvements.

HB 1147 will provide significant benefits to all rural road users, including farmers and ranchers. We respectfully request a “Do Pass” recommendation. I look forward to answering any questions.

¹ Dybing, A., et. al. (2022, Sep. 1). *Infrastructure Needs: North Dakota’s County, Township, and Tribal Roads and Bridges: 2022-2041*. NDSU Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute. Retrieved from https://www.ugpti.org/downloads/road_needs/2021-2023-legislative-study-report.pdf.

² Dybing, A., et. al. (2020, Nov.) *Infrastructure Needs: North Dakota’s County, Township and Tribal Roads and Bridges, 2021-2040*. NDSU Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute. Retrieved from <https://www.ugpti.org/resources/reports/downloads/2020-11-infrastructure-needs.pdf>.