



Contact:  
Matt Perdue, Lobbyist  
[mperdue@ndfu.org](mailto:mperdue@ndfu.org) | 701.641.3303

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**Testimony of  
Matt Perdue  
North Dakota Farmers Union  
Before the  
House Appropriations Committee  
February 8, 2023**

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Chairman Vigesaa and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill No. 1379. My name is Matt Perdue, and I am testifying on behalf of North Dakota Farmers Union's (NDFU) members.

NDFU supports HB 1379. We specifically want to highlight funding for the Agriculture Infrastructure Fund and the County and Township Bridge Fund. These two funds are important for supporting the long-term success of North Dakota's family farmers and ranchers.

### **Agriculture Infrastructure Fund**

The Agriculture Infrastructure Fund addresses the external costs associated with commodity processing and livestock facilities. These facilities are often accompanied by increased truck traffic, requiring road and bridge upgrades and improvements. The Agriculture Infrastructure Fund provides political subdivisions up to \$2.5 million or 80% of road improvement costs to support that development. New value-added projects often also face high costs to access natural gas, three-phase power, and water and sewer infrastructure. The fund provides up to \$500,000 per project to address those "last mile" infrastructure needs.

The Agriculture Infrastructure Fund will also promote local acceptance of livestock and agriculture processing facilities. The external costs of these projects are often a valid concern for local residents. The fund helps mitigate those concerns, supporting broader efforts to build local support for new projects.

The Agriculture Infrastructure Fund is modeled after an existing program in South Dakota. It is a proven model that will support continued growth in value-added agriculture in our state.

### **County and Township Bridge Fund**

The County and Township Bridge Fund is key to addressing North Dakota's growing backlog of rural infrastructure needs. 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 maintenance totals \$716 million over the 20-year period. Because many of these projects are urgent needs, UGPTI's analysis calls for \$139 million per biennium over the next 10 years.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 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](https://www.ugpti.org/downloads/road_needs/2021-2023-legislative-study-report.pdf).



UGPTI estimates \$10.5 billion of required investment in rural roads and bridges over the next 20 years.<sup>2</sup> Each biennium since 2016, that need has grown. We appreciate 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, we will continue to fall behind. The County and Township Bridge Fund addresses that need.

NDFU respectfully requests a “Do Pass” recommendation on HB 1379. I will stand for any questions.

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<sup>2</sup> *Id.*