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March 16, 2023

Testimony of:

Geoff Simon, Lobbyist #144
in support of SB 2113 – Flexible Transportation Fund
House Transportation Committee

Chairman Ruby and Committee members:

On behalf of the city, county and school district members of the Western Dakota Energy Association (WDEA), we wish to express our support for SB 2113 that would create a flexible transportation fund within the ND Department of Transportation (NDDOT).

As traditional sources of transportation funding such as the motor fuel tax dwindle, and additional demands are placed on NDDOT to support local government needs, a flexible transportation fund would provide the department the ability to respond to unanticipated opportunities. Many of these involve economic development projects, which may be lost because local government lacks the financial resources to respond to the transportation infrastructure needs of the prospective business or industry. NDDOT has indicated in previous testimony that it has more than \$2 billion in unfunded project requests from local governments and others.

Flexibility would also allow NDDOT to respond with matching funds to take advantage of federal grant availability. The recently enacted Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act provides substantial federal investment in transit, rail, bridge and road funding, increasing both the federal funding formula and increasing federal discretionary funding. The flexible fund provides NDDOT the resources to provide matching funds to secure federal grants.

NDDOT has also been financially challenged to maintain day-to-day operations. Flexibility is important to support staffing needs, maintain adequate facilities and meet operational expenses for the benefit of all North Dakota citizens. This is good policy that is responsive to the state's evolving transportation needs.

WDEA urges the House Transportation Committee to give SB 2113 a strong Do Pass recommendation.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony on this important issue.

Executive Director

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