



# WESTERN DAKOTA ENERGY ASSOCIATION

March 2, 2023

## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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Testimony of:

Geoff Simon, Lobbyist #144

in support of HB 1012 – Budget of the ND Department of Transportation  
Senate Appropriations Committee

Chairman Bekkedahl 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 the appropriations contained within the House-approved budget of the North Dakota Department of Transportation.

Among WDEA's top priorities is the widening of Highway 85 to four lanes from Watford City south to Interstate 94. We were grateful to hear news that a bid has been awarded for work this construction season on the segment from Watford City to the LongX Bridge. Building additional lanes will significantly improve the safety of this stretch, but planning must also proceed on the next segment between the LongX Bridge and the Highway 200 junction. We appreciate the inclusion of a \$50 million line of credit from the Bank of North Dakota to provide matching dollars in the event of a successful federal grant application. WDEA also understands the importance of ongoing financial support for NDDOT's planning budget.

Our county and township members are also appreciative of the \$115 million allocation to create a Flexibility Program within the department. This item recognizes the struggles that counties and townships face in maintaining or upgrading roads, and especially addressing the need to repair or replace hundreds of sub-standard bridges on rural roads.

Matching funds that would be provided by re-direction of 50 percent of the vehicle excise tax and a \$200 million appropriation from the Strategic Investment and Improvements Fund are also a wise use of taxpayer dollars to complete essential infrastructure projects.

Finally, we would like to express our appreciation and support for Section 8 of the engrossed bill that authorizes completion of an Interstate 94 rest area in the vicinity of Painted Canyon. This also represents a wise use of taxpayer dollars to enhance the state's tourism industry by encouraging travelers to stop and enjoy the natural beauty of North Dakota's landscape.

As always, we appreciate the opportunity to offer testimony and would be happy to provide additional information upon request.

Thank you for your consideration.

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