

Testimony Prepared for the  
**House Finance and Taxation Committee**

February 5, 2025

By: John Saiki, Morton County Engineer & NDACE Legislative Committee



**RE: Support for HB 1382 – Relating to Special Fuel Excise Tax for County/City/Township Road Fund**

Chairman Headland and members of the House Finance and Taxation Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB 1382. I am John Saiki, the Morton County Engineer, and I also serve as a member of the legislative committee for the ND Association of County Engineers (NDACE).

NDACE is in favor of this bill as presented. Infrastructure needs continue to increase throughout the state, at all levels of local government, City, Township and County. Legislation such as the Prairie Dog Bill have helped make improvements, but it is only a part of the answer. In Morton County, we are facing increased costs, whether for bridge maintenance and replacements or gravel. We have 200 bridges, many of our oldest bridges are approaching the end of their lives at about the same time, which makes prioritizing replacements a challenge. Gravel is becoming more scarce in the County and is more localized, so when we crush gravel in a location there are significantly higher trucking costs to get the gravel where it is needed. In addition, equipment costs increase, as does fuel and labor. All making maintenance and repairs more challenging.

This bill with the new section 3 will provide additional stable funding and an equitable distribution plan. The non-oil producing Counties, such as Morton will receive distributions based on the needs assessment compiled by the Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute. The Needs Assessment has been an ongoing study in which Counties, Townships and Cities have been providing information. The other changes in the bill provide the needed increases in fuel tax, to better assist in infrastructure maintenance and repairs.

Chairman Headland and committee members, I want to reiterate that we support the bill as written. Approving these changes will mean additional funding and enable Local Highway Departments an opportunity to better schedule maintenance and improve our aging infrastructure.