

Good morning, Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee. My name is Chad M. Orn, Deputy Director for Planning for the North Dakota Department of Transportation (NDDOT). I am here to provide testimony on HB 1249.

Section 5 of HB 1249 proposes to provide \$750,000 to the NDDOT for the purpose of providing autonomous technology grants to individuals and entities that monitor the US Highway 2 corridor to assist local and state law enforcement agencies. NDDOT shall develop an application process and guidelines, including eligibility criteria, matching requirements, eligible uses of the grant, and maximum grant awards. To be eligible, the grant recipient must certify to the NDDOT that the operation of the autonomous technology is related to monitoring US Highway 2 and to assist local and state law enforcement agencies.

The NDDOT oversees and manages a vast road and bridge network across the state. Within the NDDOT, we do use autonomous technology such as uncrewed aircraft systems (UAS) for our own use in construction and structure inspections, emergency response, surveying, communication efforts, etc. Our agency is structured and staffed to complete that mission.

There are roughly 10 state agencies as well as many local entities who use UAS to achieve various objectives, with focuses that vary significantly depending on their missions. Since the intent of this grant is to assist law enforcement along the US Highway 2 corridor, we believe appropriation and oversight of the grant would be more effectively managed by a law enforcement agency. Such an agency would be best equipped to define the necessary criteria, requirements, and eligibilities for the grant, ensuring the \$750,000 allocation delivers maximum benefits.

If the bill passes as written, we may need to permit items installed within highway right of way and would need authority depending on what the items may be. Highway right of way is to be used for highway purposes, and since law enforcement does not fall under the NDDOT, special authority may be needed to permit various devices for law enforcement purposes.

This concludes my testimony - I would be happy to answer any questions. Thank you.