

Support of SB2151

Senate Appropriations Committee, Government Operations

January 21, 2025

Good morning, Chairman Wanzek and Committee members.

I am Larry Syverson from Mayville. I grow soybeans on my farm in Traill County. I am the Chairman of the Board of Supervisors for Roseville Township in Traill County and the Executive Director of the North Dakota Township Officers Association. NDTOA represents 6,000 Township Officers serving more than 1,400 dues-paying member townships.

I once saw a statistic about bridge numbers in North Dakota that said seven counties contain more than half of the state's bridges. Traill County, where I was born and raised, is one of those seven counties. So, I learned early the importance of bridges for transportation because no matter where one needs to go, there are bridges to cross to get there in those counties.

Many bridges have been eliminated; some have been converted to culvert or box culvert crossings. In some places, Texas-style crossings can be used. Some of the lesser-used routes have been abandoned, and the bridges closed.

Much of the traffic on these rural routes is loaded trucks, and when these loads are detoured, it is not just an inconvenience. It means that those loads will be driven over more miles of road to concentrate the traffic on the remaining roads and bridges. This will accelerate the wear on those roads and perhaps other bridges. So, eliminating a bridge does not equate to total cost savings.

We have people that have traveled some distance today to testify. I want to introduce two members of the NDTOA Board of Directors to speak further on behalf of the association. Todd Weber is the NDTOA Vice President; he will be followed by Tim Geinert, the NDTOA District 6 Director.

I thank them for driving in to testify today. I also thank the others in the room who are here to support critical rural bridges.

Chairman Wanzek and committee members, thank you for this opportunity to testify today. Please give SB2151 your favorable consideration. This concludes my prepared statement. I will try to answer any questions you might have.