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Mr. Chairman and members of the Senate Transportation Committee,

I am Brent Baldwin, a farmer from Saint Thomas, North Dakota. Thank you for the opportunity to testify, I am representing the Red River Valley Sugarbeet Growers Association in support of Senate Bill 2142.

Our township roads and bridges are in a state of substantial need. You have already heard all the numbers on the number of road miles, number of bridges out, the number of challenges that excess water has presented, and I am here to share they are real.

Our townships run on a shoestring budget, often only having enough revenue to add a few loads of gravel while we cross our fingers and hope for dry winters, so we don't have to push snow. Many times, its farmers plowing the township roads on their own dime, not only for their own farm needs but also for those moving out to the countryside who are often un-prepared to plow a mile out to the nearest county highway.

During farm-work, we do our best to clean mud and dirt off equipment before moving fields, we maintain gravel roads to the best of our ability with box scrapers and many times we will pay for gravel to be applied on our dime.

Some may say the answer is to raise your mills, however often times we are already at the maximum allowed already. Just to give you an example from one of our farmsteads, we pay about \$2,676 a year on that residence and just \$251.44 of that goes to the township, this amount is not even enough for one load of gravel, and yet we have 57 miles in the township to maintain. As you have heard, a safe township road can cost up to \$14,000 per mile to gravel.

The township roads and bridges were built well over 100 years ago, and were designed for 100 bushels of wheat, now we are carrying far more than that, and the roads and bridges just can't handle it anymore. We need to figure this out to maintain our competitiveness on the global market for all our agriculture products.

There are many stories of when the fire and rescue or even your daily mail delivery gets delayed or completely prevented from getting to a residence after a blizzard or a two-inch rain. We need to make sure our township roads are safe for the public and maintained enough for agriculture products to be transported to market.

We strongly support this bill and encourage the committee to provide a DO PASS recommendation.

Thank you – I will stand for any questions.

Brent Baldwin – Farmer – Saint Thomas, North Dakota  
President - Red River Valley Sugarbeet Growers Association