



**North Dakota Grain Growers Association  
Testimony in favor of SB 2142  
Senate Transportation Committee  
January 17, 2025**

Chairman Clemens, members of the Senate Transportation Committee; for the record my name is Ryan Ellis. I am a family farmer and rancher from Williston, North Dakota and I am also President of the North Dakota Grain Growers Association. I appear before you today in support of SB 2142. This forward-thinking legislation addresses critical infrastructure challenges faced by rural communities and ensures long-term support for road and bridge projects in non-oil-producing counties.

**Importance of Senate Bill No. 2142 to North Dakota's Agriculture and Rural Communities**

**1. Rural Infrastructure Supports Agriculture:**

- Grain producers depend on reliable township roads and bridges to transport crops to elevators, markets, and processing facilities.
- Many rural roads and bridges are aging or insufficiently maintained, creating logistical challenges that increase costs and reduce efficiency.

**2. Equitable Allocation of Resources:**

- By allocating funds based on the number of road miles in each township, the bill ensures that resources are distributed fairly and address the greatest needs.

**3. Economic and Community Impact:**

- Well-maintained roads and bridges are essential for supporting local economies, fostering rural development, and improving safety for residents, businesses, and emergency services.
- Strengthening infrastructure will help retain and attract families and businesses to rural communities.

**Key Features of Senate Bill No. 2142**

**1. Township Road and Bridge Sustainability Fund:**

- The creation of this fund provides a dedicated, ongoing source of funding for township road and bridge infrastructure projects, ensuring long-term sustainability.

- By using revenue from motor vehicle excise taxes, the fund supports infrastructure without requiring new taxes.

## **2. Eligibility Requirements to Ensure Accountability:**

- Organized and unorganized townships must meet specific criteria to qualify for funding, such as maintaining roads, levying a minimum number of mills, and submitting annual certifications.
- This ensures that funds are allocated to townships actively investing in their infrastructure and committed to maintaining their assets.

## **3. Fair Distribution Model:**

- Allocations are based on proportional road miles, ensuring that funding is distributed equitably across eligible townships.
- Non-oil-producing counties with unorganized townships are also included, ensuring no community is left behind.

## **4. Transparency and Oversight:**

- Regular certifications and reporting requirements provide transparency and accountability, ensuring funds are used appropriately for infrastructure projects.

## **Broader Benefits of Senate Bill No. 2142**

### **1. Support for Farmers and Rural Businesses:**

- Reliable infrastructure reduces transportation costs and ensures timely delivery of crops to market, supporting profitability for grain producers.
- Improved roads and bridges benefit all rural industries, from agriculture to energy and small businesses.

### **2. Safety for Residents:**

- Investing in infrastructure reduces accidents, improves road conditions, and enhances safety for rural families, school buses, and emergency services.

### **3. Strengthening Rural Communities:**

- This legislation provides critical resources to rural areas, enhancing their ability to thrive economically and socially while addressing long-standing disparities in infrastructure funding.

## **Conclusion**

**Senate Bill No. 2142** represents a vital investment in North Dakota's rural infrastructure and agricultural economy. By creating a sustainable funding mechanism for township road and bridge projects, this bill supports the long-term needs of rural communities and ensures that grain producers and other rural industries can operate efficiently and safely.

The NDGGA strongly encourages the members of this legislative assembly to pass this essential bill to secure the future of rural infrastructure and strengthen North Dakota's agricultural backbone.