

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 24, 2019

Secretary Elaine L. Chao
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Chao,

I write in support of the 2019 Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD 2019) Transportation Discretionary Grant proposal submitted jointly by the Vermont Agency of Transportation and the New Hampshire Department of Transportation for the “*Hinsdale, NH – Brattleboro, VT NH Route 119 Bridge Replacement Project.*” This project will address the needs of rural portions of these two states by bypassing two functionally-obsolete bridges with a new bridge just south of their current location over the Connecticut River.

After almost 100-years of use in the harsh northern climate, the vital Anna Hunt Marsh and Charles Dana Bridges are in deteriorated condition, progressing to the point that significant rehabilitation or replacement is required. With funding from the BUILD Program, a new bridge will be built to allow for the continuation of vital economic development and connectivity.

This crossing is critical for the movement of goods and people locally, regionally and internationally. It carries the vital highway NH Route 119, which connects Cheshire County and the Monadnock Region of New Hampshire to the international trade corridor of Interstate 91 in Vermont, which then connects the region to the Canadian trade market to the north and the larger New England ports to the south. Without these bridges, the closest crossing requires a 16.9-mile detour to the north through Chesterfield or a 19-mile detour to the south through Massachusetts.

The current bridges are vitally important to the economy and quality of life for New Hampshire and Vermont residents. They connect the communities of Hinsdale, New Hampshire and Brattleboro, Vermont, allow the many residents of Hinsdale who commute to Vermont for employment a convenient passage over the border and provide businesses in the area with a route to make easy deliveries of goods and services to the region. The bridges are also critical for residents and medical professionals in the area to have quick access to the nearest medical facility in Brattleboro, which serves the region.

Once construction of the new bridge is complete, the two bypassed historic truss bridges will be rehabilitated, preserving two historic resources and providing recreational opportunities for both communities to enjoy the Connecticut River and the island located between these structures.

The project is consistent with state of good repair plans for both NHDOT and VTTrans and appears in both the New Hampshire’s approved Ten Year Transportation Improvement Plan and Vermont’s State Transportation Improvement Program. It represents a significant investment for the region that would maintain and enhance the quality of life for the area residents and promote economic development. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Jon Jarvis on my staff at (603) 647-7500.

Sincerely,



Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator

CC: Commissioner Victoria Sheehan, NHDOT, Secretary Joseph Flynn, VTTrans