

October 18, 2011

Mr. Ray LaHood, Secretary of Transportation
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590

RE: Northern Express Transportation Authority's TIGER III Grant Application

Dear Mr. Secretary,

This letter conveys Columbia Grain's support for the Port of Northern Montana Multimodal Hub Center project. Requested funds will be combined with over \$7.7 million in non-federal funding and used to construct Montana's first multimodal facility to facilitate the export of food commodities.

Columbia Grain is a leading world grain exporter. We supply superior quality western grain to service both US domestic markets and export markets worldwide. The key to performance in the highly competitive grain business is efficiency: putting it all together.

Constructing a multimodal rail facility in Shelby, Montana would support our mission to develop an advanced grain trading organization, not only in terms of storage and shipping, but also in quality and reliability of our products. Identifying the origin of food ingredients and food sources is of prime importance to consumers, particularly where food products may be faulty and risk consumer protection.

The traceability of containerized cargos enables consumers with targeted and accurate information about food products during different stages from processing to distribution and facilitates the withdrawal of food from the market during a recall or quality audit.

Montana is the 4th largest State in the nation yet it does not have the ability to ship or receive containerized cargos for import or export due to the lack of a multimodal facility capable of accepting and delivering unit trains of containers. This project will construct Montana's first multimodal facility to enable the export of food commodities and other goods--a nationally and regionally significant commercial and accomplishment.

As funding applications are evaluated, I would hope that you would carefully consider the merits of this project.

Sincerely,



Tom Hammond
President/CEO