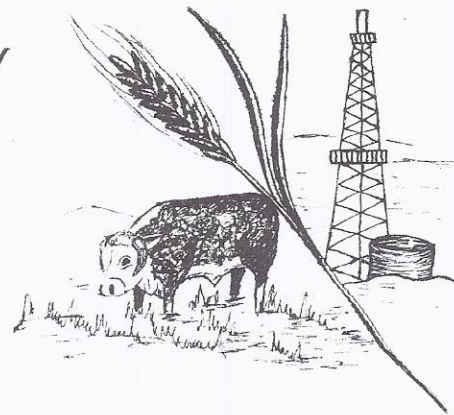


PONDERA COUNTY

20 4TH AVENUE S.W.

CONRAD, MONTANA 59425



October 18, 2011

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

RE: Port of Northern Montana Multimodal Hub Center TIGER III Application

Dear Mr. Secretary,

This letter conveys Pondera County's support for the Port of Northern Montana Multimodal Hub Center project, for which the Northern Express Transportation Authority has requested \$9,998,910 in TIGER III grant funding. Federal funds will be combined with a \$7,346,558 (42 percent) non-federal match that has been committed to the project and dedicated to completing it.

Montana is the fourth largest State in the nation yet we currently do not have the ability to ship or receive containerized cargos for import and export due to the lack of a multimodal facility capable of accepting and delivering unit trains of containers.

This project would construct Montana's first multimodal facility to facilitate the export of agricultural commodities and manufactured products--a noteworthy commercial accomplishment. North Central Montana based manufacturers lack the ability to containerize their cargos for export delivery to world markets. The facility as proposed would serve to address this statewide shortfall in export potential.

The project is 100 percent ready to go. It has received all required environmental clearances including Categorical Exclusions from the Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Railroad Administration.

As funding applications are evaluated, I would hope that you would carefully consider the project's many benefits.

Sincerely,

Cynthia A. Johnson
Chair

Joseph Christiaens
Member

Sandra J. Broesder
Member