

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
STATE OF MONTANA

STEVE BULLOCK
GOVERNOR



MIKE COONEY
LT. GOVERNOR

April 4, 2018

Lieutenant General Todd Semonite
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Headquarters
441 G St. NW
Washington, D.C. 20314-1000

Dear General Semonite:

I am pleased to write in support of the proposed Sandpoint Junction Connector project.

Agriculture is one of Montana's largest economic sectors and the backbone of our rural economy. Montana exports wheat, pulse crops, barely, oats, rye, malt, and many other agricultural commodities from our state to feed people across the nation and the world. The majority of these high quality agricultural products are delivered by rail through the Pacific Northwest for markets in Washington, Oregon, California and overseas.

In 2008, BNSF shipped just 25,000 carloads of Montana wheat and 411 carloads of pulse crops to the Pacific Northwest. Today, BNSF ships more than 39,000 carloads of Montana wheat and 3,600 carloads of pulse crops to the Pacific Northwest. This is almost a 55% increase for Montana wheat and nearly a 900% increase in pulse crops over the last past ten years. The increase in demand is a great benefit to Montana's economy and highlights the changing agricultural food supply chain of the world. To ensure that agricultural producers in Montana, and in our neighboring states, get a fair market price for their high quality products we need an efficient and reliable rail network.

The current single lane bridge across Lake Pend Oreille has become a bottleneck for rail shipments coming from Montana during our peak agricultural and harvest times. The longer grain stays in the bin, the less farmers make—causing a ripple effect throughout Montana's economy. Since 2014, BNSF has shown their commitment to the efficient flow of goods by investing millions of dollars and expanding miles of double track along the northern transcontinental route to increase rail capacity. These investments are driven by the record demand for agricultural products from Montana and the west—including an all-time record volume of agricultural products just this past March.

The completion of the Sandpoint Junction Connector project will open up the current bottleneck along the northern corridor and allow BNSF to meet current volume demands and deliver a more reliable service for Montana farms, ranches, businesses, and future exporters.

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I am confident the Army Corps of Engineers and the U.S. Coast Guard, along with all local and state entities, will conduct a thorough review and analysis of this proposal. I ask that we get shovels in the ground soon to meet the needs of businesses in Montana and throughout the United States.

Thanks again for the opportunity to share my support for this project. I ask that you consider BNSF Railway's application to proceed with the Sandpoint Junction favorably.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'S Bullock', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

STEVE BULLOCK
Governor

cc: Admiral Paul Zukunft, U.S. Coast Guard
U.S. Coast Guard, District 13 Bridge Administration Office
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Walla Wall District