



C.L. "BUTCH" OTTER  
GOVERNOR

March 5, 2018

Steven M. Fischer  
Bridge Program Administrator  
U.S. Coast Guard  
Thirteenth Coast Guard District  
915 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave., Room 3510  
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**Via E-mail Only:** [D13-PF-D13BRIDGES@uscg.mil](mailto:D13-PF-D13BRIDGES@uscg.mil)

**Re: Sandpoint Junction Connector Project, Application No. NWW-2007-1303**

To Whom It May Concern,

Please accept this letter expressing my support for the proposed Sandpoint Junction Connector.

Idaho is a merchant state. We produce far more food and fiber than our people can consume. That means we must export much of what we produce to other states and internationally, and in turn we must import many of the tools of production as well as commodities and products not grown or made in Idaho.

Meeting the needs of Idahoans doing business with distant markets throughout America and the world requires safe and efficient rail service. The Sandpoint Junction Connector is part of BNSF Railway's continuing investment in its Idaho infrastructure. The project was announced publicly in 2014. Rail traffic has continued to increase since then, and now it's time to get started upgrading this important rail corridor.

There has been a railroad bridge across Lake Pend Oreille since the early 1900s. And although it has been refurbished three times in the past decade, the bridge no longer provides enough capacity to move freight efficiently. The many Class I and AMTRAK rail lines running across America's northern tier come to a single track across the lake. It has become a chokepoint in need of a solution. Adding a second bridge paralleling BNSF's existing bridge would reduce rail congestion in northern Idaho, resulting in improved timing and throughput of its freight cars.

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I also have every confidence that the Army Corps of Engineers and U.S. Coast Guard, together with Idaho's departments of Environmental Quality and Lands, will see to it that the law is obeyed.

During the past few years, BNSF Railway has invested more than \$120 million in infrastructure improvements in our state, including several double-tracking projects in northern Idaho. This project will exceed \$100 million. Idaho's shippers and our state's economy will benefit, as will local residents for whom congested rail crossings are a nagging problem.

In short, the project has my wholehearted support. Thank you for your time and positive consideration of BNSF Railway's application to proceed with the Sandpoint Junction Connector.

As Always – Idaho, "Esto Perpetua"

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "C.L. 'Butch' Otter". The signature is stylized and cursive.

CLO/mw

C.L. "Butch" Otter  
Governor of Idaho

Cc: Shane Slate, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Project Manager  
(via e-mail only [NWW\\_BNSF\\_Pendoreille@usace.army.mil](mailto:NWW_BNSF_Pendoreille@usace.army.mil))