

United States Senate

May 14, 2018

Admiral Paul F. Zukunft
U.S. Coast Guard
2703 Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue SE
Washington, D.C. 20593-7000

Dear Admiral Zukunft,

I am writing in support of the Sandpoint Junction Connector project and urge its swift permitting approval. Completion of this project is critical for the efficient movement of commodities throughout Montana and the region.

This project would add a second bridge across Lake Pend Oreille to alleviate the chokepoint due to only having one track present for freight going in either direction. Agriculture is Montana's largest economic driver and the industry relies on rail to get their products to market. For example, 80% of Montana wheat is exported and much of the harvest is shipped to the Asia via BNSF rail and West Coast ports. Over the previous ten years, there has been a drastic increase in the amount of Montana commodities shipped by BNSF, leading to further delays at great economic detriment to Montana producers. I applaud BNSF's commitment to invest in this project and to ensure that people and products are able to arrive safely and on time.

I encourage you to work expeditiously with all parties involved to review and approve the Sandpoint Junction Connector project. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to reach out to my staff.

Sincerely,



Steve Daines
United States Senator

cc: Lt. General Todd Semonite, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Walla Walla District
U.S. Coast Guard, District 13 Bridge Administration Office