



STATE OF NORTH DAKOTA
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
600 E BOULEVARD AVE, DEPT 602
BISMARCK, ND 58505-0020

DOUG GOEHRING
COMMISSIONER

March 3, 2021

Rob McCaskey
Coast Guard District Eight Project Officer
1222 Spruce Street
St. Louis, MO 63103-2832


Dear Mr. McCaskey,

I am writing regarding the BNSF Railway bridge project across the Missouri River at Bismarck, North Dakota. A strong, reliable rail network is essential to North Dakota's ag community to ship commodities out of the state to markets here and abroad. Ag shipments by rail have doubled since 2000 and continued growth is expected as North Dakota producers increase production and take advantage of emerging markets. Besides agriculture, coal, energy, and industrial products rely on the rail network and the line over the Missouri River. To ensure rail service is not impacted for any of these industries, the Coast Guard should act quickly to issue a permit allowing BNSF to construct a new bridge as soon as possible and allow the old bridge to be removed.

Options that would leave the existing bridge in place add 2-3 years to the timeline and add significant costs to the project due to property acquisition, mitigation to Bismarck's water reservoir and design costs. If the existing bridge stays, it could compromise the integrity of the new bridge as it deteriorates. It could create a huge liability and does not recognize and respect the property owned by BNSF.

A new bridge is safer and would increase capacity and velocity as it can be designed with a double track. The increased cost of leaving the existing bridge in place would have a detrimental effect on our communities, our industries, and our society as it would be passed on to the consumer and the shipper.

Sincerely,


Doug Goehring
North Dakota Agriculture Commissioner