



March 1, 2019

The Honorable Elaine Chao
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
West Building – 1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Madam Secretary:

I am writing to express my support for the Joint Venture of Macon County and the City of Decatur Illinois' Infrastructure for Rebuilding America or INFRA grant application. The application provides for replacing the Reas Bridges outside of Decatur as part of the East Beltway project.

Decatur is home to production facilities for 2 Fortune 500 companies, Archer Daniels Midland and Caterpillar in addition to another major agricultural products producer, Tate and Lyle. Decatur also hosts 3 Class I railroads through the community including the Norfolk Southern, the CSX and the Canadian National.

The Beltway will provide better access to the industrial base of the region, Richland Community College and the ADM intermodal ramp, a key component of the Midwest Inland Port. The result will be more reliable supply chains for manufacturers and enhanced freight mobility through the region, particularly for farm-to-market suppliers from the rural areas to the east. Given the projected growth in freight movements in the U.S. over the next 20 years, it is important to support mid-market intermodal capabilities to meet the demand. Decatur can and will play a critical role in relieving pressure in the Chicago-area and provide more reliable freight distribution with easy access to large metropolitan areas including Chicago, Indianapolis, St. Louis, Kansas City, Louisville and Columbus among others.

Reas Bridges are structurally deficient and as a result have recently been weight restricted forcing grain trucks and other heavy vehicles traveling from the rural areas to the east to re-route through the downtown Decatur area. Because of the significant presence of railroads, that results in delays at grade crossings and increased interactions with vehicular traffic posing a greater safety risk. This project will address a critical state of good repair issue, provide better access for rural populations to the services they need, help expand fiber in Decatur and more rural areas, and provide a more efficient supply chain for area farmers and businesses.

Given the many public benefits associated with this project, I strongly urge you to support this grant. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Rick Tolson", is written over a horizontal line.

Rick Tolson
Division Chief Human Resources Officer, Central II Division