

United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510-1304

April 28, 2020

The Honorable Elaine Chao  
Secretary, US Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE  
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Chao,

I am writing in support of the City of Decatur and Macon County, Illinois' INFRA grant application. The application includes replacing the Reas Bridges just outside of Decatur as part of the larger East Beltway project.

Decatur is home to production facilities for two Fortune 500 companies, Archer Daniels Midland and Caterpillar, in addition to another major agricultural products producer, Tate and Lyle. Decatur also hosts two Class I railroads through the community including the Norfolk Southern, Canadian National, and two short line railroads, Decatur Central Railroad, and Decatur and Eastern Railroad (Watco). Decatur is home to the largest biennial farm show, Farm Progress, which is located just minutes from Reas Bridges.

The Beltway will provide better access to the industrial base of the region, Richland Community College, and the new intermodal ramp. The result will be more reliable supply chains for manufacturers and enhanced freight mobility through the region. 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 was almost closed on two occasions in the last six years. Because of the structural issues, the Bridges have been weight restricted forcing grain trucks and other heavy vehicles traveling from rural areas to the east to re-route approximately 11 miles through the downtown Decatur area. Due to the significant presence of railroads in the Decatur area, there are often lengthy delays at grade crossings and increased interactions with light vehicle motorists, pedestrians, and cyclists posing a greater safety risk for all users. 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 business.

Given the many public benefits associated with this project, I urge you to give this application the most serious consideration. Thank you for your attention to this matter and if you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at my Springfield office at (217) 492-4062.