



STATE OF MAINE
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
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AUGUSTA, MAINE
04333-0001

Paul R. LePage
GOVERNOR

October 11, 2017

The Honorable Elaine Chao
Secretary of the U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Chao:

I write in strong support of the Maine Department of Transportation's TIGER grant application and the Penquis Region Rural Bridge Project that this funding, if awarded, would aid. This project would replace a network of three key highway bridges in rural Maine. The bridges have been deemed either structurally deficient or fracture critical, and need replacement or significant maintenance in order to avoid closure.

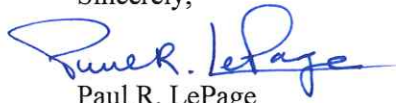
As you know, much of Maine is rural, which creates unique infrastructure challenges. Having a reliable transportation infrastructure is critical for Maine residents. These three bridges are vital to the residents in their areas for access to I-95 and other parts of the state. A closure of any one of the bridges would create a detour of 12 to 98 miles, which could prove extremely detrimental to not only the economic vitality of this region of Maine, but also to the residents who rely on these structures in the event of an emergency. Emergency response times would increase in the event of closures due to an increase in distance responders would need to travel. For example, some residents living in Eastern Piscataquis County would face longer emergency response times should the West Branch Bridge in T3 Indian Township Purchase be closed. A closure of this bridge would turn a 5-mile trip to the closest hospital into a 30-mile trip for those residing on the southwest side of the bridge.

These bridges also provide access to rural forestlands in Maine, which are essential to the forest industry. This industry, while unfortunately in decline as of late, is still a great driver of the Maine economy. It generates more than 33,000 jobs across the state and has an \$8.5 billion total economic impact.

The cost for the construction and construction engineering of the three bridge replacement projects is estimated at \$20.3 million. MaineDOT is seeking a TIGER grant in the amount of roughly half the project construction costs.

I thank you for your careful review of this application, and respectfully request that you consider awarding the Maine Department of Transportation and the Penquis Region Rural Bridge project this TIGER funding.

Sincerely,


Paul R. LePage
Governor, State of Maine



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