

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 19, 2017

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

Dear Secretary Chao:

We write to express our strong support for the Maine Department of Transportation's (MDOT) application for funding for the Penquis Region Rural Bridges Project through the Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grant program. The project will fulfill local transportation and economic needs by repairing three highway bridges in two neighboring counties in rural Maine.

The State of Maine has unique infrastructure challenges due to its geography, weather conditions, and population density. Much of Maine is rural, making reliable infrastructure critical for people to access employment, education, health care, and other services. MDOT's TIGER project targets important local infrastructure, specifically three highway bridges in our state's rural Penobscot and Piscataquis Counties. These bridges are crucial access points for area residents, particularly to a major nearby highway, as well as other parts of the state via state roads. Closure of these bridges, if not repaired, could cause users to have to detour 100 miles or more. This would be detrimental for residents, truck drivers moving cargo, and tourists traveling to experience Maine's natural beauty, and would have significant consequences for the region's economy and much-needed economic development.

As evidenced by this TIGER proposal, MDOT is determined to repair Maine's quickly declining bridge infrastructure. We strongly believe that this region of the country cannot be competitive on a regional, national, or global scale if the highway corridors are not upgraded to ensure resiliency and reliability. Improving these bridges would enhance the quality of life for area residents and further expand economic opportunity in rural Maine.

Thank you for your attention to this issue. We respectfully request that the Department give careful consideration to the Maine Department of Transportation's application, subject to all applicable laws and regulations, and ask that your staff notify Katie Seelen (Collins) at (202) 224-2523 and Adam Lachman (King) at (202) 224-5344 when a final decision has been made.

Sincerely,



Susan M. Collins
United States Senator



Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator