

GREATER
PORTSMOUTH
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

April 16, 2014

The Honorable Anthony Foxx
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave., S.E.
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Foxx:

On behalf of the Greater Portsmouth Chamber of Commerce, I am writing to express my strong support for the TIGER 2014 grant application for \$25 million submitted jointly by the states of Maine and New Hampshire for construction of the rail portion of a larger project to replace the Sarah Mildred Long (SML) Bridge.

The SML Bridge carries the Route 1 Bypass over the Piscataqua River between Kittery, Maine and Portsmouth, New Hampshire. It also carries the Pan-Am Railways line over the river and connects to the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard (PNSY), which is responsible for the overhaul, repair and modernization of Los Angeles-class nuclear-powered submarines. The rail portion of the bridge is the only means to service the PNSY with mission-critical materials. The PNSY has roughly 5,300 employees, a \$361-million payroll and \$67.5 million in contracted facility services. A June 2012 economic impact analysis noted the base has a \$1.6 billion/year overall economic impact for the region. The SML Bridge plays an integral role for the base.

The bridge is currently 74 years old, having been built in 1940. An inspection in 2009 found the bridge to be structurally deficient and functionally obsolete, which caused it to be posted at 20 tons for small pickup trucks and cars only. The truss spans on the bridge are Fracture Critical, meaning that failure of certain steel tension members could result in failure of the entire structure. The bridge has been closed multiple times in recent years due to malfunctions and for unplanned major repairs. As a result of recent inspections and continued deterioration, State maintenance workers have been working this spring to install temporary shoring to keep the bridge in service and maintain the 20 ton posting. It needs to be replaced.

Formula funding from FHWA and FRA are not available for the rail portion of the project. Without replacement, we expect the bridge could no longer be maintained in a safe condition, even with major maintenance funding. If TIGER funding cannot be obtained for the rail portion of the bridge, it will likely close before 2020. This would have dramatic negative effects on the capacity of the 1-95 High Level Bridge, which would experience sustained traffic delays on summer weekends and other high traffic volume days.

The SML Bridge is important to the economies of Maine and New Hampshire. It plays a critical role for Maine and New Hampshire, being the back-up Bridge for the 1-95 High Level Bridge. The 1-95 High Level Bridge and the SML combined provide over \$8.4 billion in economic impacts to Maine annually. With the SML Bridge posted for just cars and light trucks, any temporary closure of the 1-95 High Level Bridge would result in a 21 mile detour. It also plays an important national security role for the PSNY. This investment will enhance quality of life for residents of both states, promote economic development, and is one of the only sources of funding to replace the deck that carries rail across, the bridge to the shipyard. I urge your strong consideration of the SML Bridge application for TIGER funding.

Sincerely,



Doug Bates
President