

May 30, 2013

The Honorable Ray LaHood
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Secretary LaHood:

We write to express our support for the Departments of Transportation for the States of Maine and New Hampshire in their joint application for a \$25 million Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) V grant for the Sarah Mildred Long (“Sarah Long”) Bridge Replacement Project.

The Sarah Mildred Long Bridge connects Portsmouth, NH and Kittery, ME and provides essential redundancy for the I-95 High-Level Bridge linking the two states. Should the High-Level Bridge connecting the two states be closed, and the Sarah Long Bridge is unavailable or remains posted, the nearest detour is more than 20 miles away. The Bridge’s rail component also supports an important national security need, enabling the safe and efficient transport of nuclear waste from the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard. This critical infrastructure, constructed over 70 years ago, has reached the end of its service life and is in need of a full replacement. The Federal Highway Administration has classified the bridge as structurally deficient, and noted its truss spans are fracture critical, meaning that the failure of steel tension members could result in collapse. Full replacement of this bridge is vital to this coastal corridor, as well as the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard and the Port of New Hampshire.

Furthermore, the existing construction of the bridge, combined with the currents of the Piscataqua River, make entering the Port of New Hampshire upstream from the bridge difficult for commercial vessels, as demonstrated by a recent oil tanker collision. As the size of cargo vessels increases, a new bridge is needed to ensure that the port remains a safe and viable destination for cargo traffic.

The Sarah Long Bridge has been closed multiple times in recent years due to malfunctions and unplanned major repairs, and its full replacement is critical to maintain safety and support economic activity, including an estimated \$1.6 billion regional benefit from the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard. While Maine and New Hampshire have identified a significant percentage of the funding required to complete the project, support from TIGER is essential to the bi-state effort to replace the bridge. The new bridge will include features to enhance livability, improve commercial navigation, and maintain critical national security priorities.

We strongly support the Sarah Mildred Long Bridge Replacement Project and urge your full consideration, under all applicable laws and regulations, of the competitive grant application submitted by the Maine Department of Transportation and the New Hampshire Department of Transportation. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Susan Collins
United States Senator

Angus King
United States Senator

Mike Michaud
Member of Congress

Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress

Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator

Kelly Ayotte
United States Senator

Ann Kuster
Member of Congress

Carol Shea-Porter
Member of Congress