

**Testimony
Of
L. John MacMartin
For
United States Senate
Committee on the Budget
“A Crucial Infrastructure Investment”**

Good Morning, Chairman Conrad and members of the Senate Budget Committee, my name is L. John MacMartin and I am the President of the Minot Area Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber is a private, non-profit organization representing nearly 700 businesses in the Minot area. One of the Chambers more involved committees is our Infrastructure Committee. I tell you that because it is the belief of the committee that we must constantly be upgrading and improving the infrastructure of the area. To the Chamber Committee, infrastructure includes streets, roads and highways, storm and sanitary sewer systems, water systems, the airport, Minot State University's physical plant and our parks and recreation complexes. On an annual basis the Chamber's committee provides input to NDDOT, the City of Minot and the County of Ward regarding the infrastructure projects planned.

Why you might ask is the Chamber, the business community, so interested in what the public sector does? Well, first, it is quite simply the money being spent in the Minot area for those projects. The money provides firms with contracts and those contracts in turn lead to the employment of individuals to fulfill the terms of the contracts. That scenario is the foundation of the free enterprise system. Secondly, infrastructure improvements allow the community or area to grow – water systems (local and NAWS), sanitary and storm sewer improvements and expansions, streets and roads. The roads, highways and bridges then all facilitate the movement of raw products and finished goods.

Today you have or will hear about a very specific need in the Minot area for a grade separation on 55th Street. The feasibility study which was completed on where to locate the grade separation looked at several streets in the east end of Minot and the preferred location was 55th Street. The study points out that there would be a cost of nearly \$21.4 million dollars over the 40 year life cycle of the grade separation in delay costs if the grade separation is not built. The study also points out that if the grade separation is built the cost for delays is cut in half to \$10.4 million and that remaining cost is due to delays on other streets not identified for a grade separation.

As you know, energy activity is increasing in western North Dakota. In the Minot area, the activity associated with oil exploration and extraction is in connection with the Bakken formation and that activity keeps moving closer to Minot. I mention this because with that activity, roads and highways are impacted, maintenance activity has to increase and roads need to be either built new or upgraded. Recent traffic counts on Highway 23 near New Town have shown increases in vehicles counted from a low of 12% to a high of 373% from 2006 to 2008 and those increases are directly related to oil activity.

So what does this all mean? Infrastructure needs to continue to be a priority item for the federal government. If North Dakota is to continue to grow, to provide homes, to have a climate where

business can thrive and provide jobs and continue to provide energy to the nation, we need to keep our eye on infrastructure and to do that we need the federal government as a partner.

Senator Conrad, I thank you for the opportunity to share these comments with the Senate Budget Committee.