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May 3, 2009

Rep. Collin C. Peterson, U.S. House of Representatives  
2211 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

RE: Paul Bunyan State Trail Bridge over TH 197 (PBST Bridge)

Dear Congressman Peterson,

The Paul Bunyan State Trail runs over a hundred miles from Brainerd to Bemidji. The final section needed to complete the trail is through the City of Bemidji's south shore redevelopment site that will include the Bemidji Regional Event Center. However, there are safety concerns where the trail crosses Trunk Highway 197 at First Street East.

An engineering study has determined that the best solution to the safety concerns is a multi-modal Paul Bunyan State Trail Bridge over TH 197 (PBST Bridge). The public will have an opportunity to comment on the proposed project during the environmental review that we plan to conduct. Estimated cost for the project is \$2,000,000. State and local highway aid and local trail sales tax will provide the 20 percent local funding that is required to complete the project.

The construction of PBST Bridge will provide a safe pedestrian, bicycle and snow machine crossing over a multi-lane state highway. This multi-modal crossing is at the intersection of the Paul Bunyan State Trail, which connects to the broader region, and two local trails, the West Lake Bemidji Trail and the East West Trail. The PBST Bridge will allow non-motorized traffic to safely connect among commercial, recreational, and residential areas.

Building transportation infrastructure that supports non-motorized modes of transportation reduces congestion and energy use. The PBST Bridge will provide a crossing at a key intersection to enable the safe use of alternative modes of transportation. The bridge will reduce at grade crossings, thereby reducing the time that traffic is stopped by non-motorized users for crossing TH197 and reducing the idling time for vehicles.

The state of Minnesota enjoys \$11 billion in gross sales in the leisure and hospitality sector, a figure that reflects a growth rate of 35% from 2000 to 2007. Beltrami County's share of the tourism industry is more than \$70 million, reaping more than \$4 million in state sales taxes and providing nearly 2,000 industry jobs for our area. Completing the PBST Bridge will provide access to our region and community, support our tourism economy, and provide a safe crossing on the PBST for the thousands of local and visiting users.

Construction for the Bemidji Regional Event Center is currently underway and is the catalyst for a \$90,000,000, 140 acre redevelopment project in the heart of Bemidji. The south shore redevelopment includes construction of the utility and street infrastructure for a mixed use development and recreational area that includes constructing the corridor base for the Paul Bunyan State Trail. Now is the time to move forward with a multi-modal bridge to complete a safe access for the Paul Bunyan State Trail and to the redeveloped south shore of Lake Bemidji.

The City of Bemidji supports this project but needs federal funding to ensure its completion. Your support is sincerely appreciated.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "John Chattin". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name and title.

John Chattin  
City Manager

jmc