



**TIGER FY 2015 Discretionary Grant Application  
Willmar Rail Connector & Industrial Access**

**Attachment 1**

**LETTERS OF SUPPORT**

1. Governor, State of Minnesota: \_\_\_\_\_ Mark Dayton
2. US Senator, Minnesota: \_\_\_\_\_ Al Franken
3. US Senator, Minnesota: \_\_\_\_\_ Amy Klobuchar
4. US Congressman, Minnesota 7<sup>th</sup> Congressional District: \_\_\_\_\_ Collin Peterson
5. State Senator (District 17): \_\_\_\_\_ Lyle Koenen
6. State Representative (District 17B): \_\_\_\_\_ David Baker
7. State Representative (District 17A): \_\_\_\_\_ Tim Miller
8. Commissioner, Minnesota Department of Transportation: \_\_\_\_\_ Charles Zelle
9. President, BNSF Railway \_\_\_\_\_ Carl Ice
10. Director, MN Department of Employment and Economic Development: \_\_\_\_\_ Kevin McKinnon
11. Chairman, Kandiyohi County Board of Commissioners \_\_\_\_\_ Jim Butterfield
12. Mayor, City of Willmar: \_\_\_\_\_ Marv Calvin
13. Chief of Police, City of Willmar: \_\_\_\_\_ Jim Felt
14. Fire Chief, City of Willmar: \_\_\_\_\_ Gary Hendrickson
15. Manager, Rice Memorial Hospital – Ambulance Service: \_\_\_\_\_ Brad Hanson
16. Executive Director, Kandiyohi County and City of Willmar EDC: \_\_\_\_\_ Steve Renquist
17. Chairman, Willmar Township: \_\_\_\_\_ Donovan Monson
18. Executive Director, Mid-MN Development Commission: \_\_\_\_\_ Donn Winckler
19. President, Willmar Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce: \_\_\_\_\_ Ken Warner
20. Director, Willmar Area Multicultural Business Center: \_\_\_\_\_ Toni Sing
21. President, Chairman, Minnesota Commercial Railway: \_\_\_\_\_ John Gohmann



# STATE OF MINNESOTA

## Office of Governor Mark Dayton

116 Veterans Service Building ♦ 20 West 12th Street ♦ Saint Paul, MN 55155

May 27, 2015

The Honorable Anthony R. Foxx  
Secretary  
United States Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue S.E.  
Washington D.C. 20590

RE: Support for Minnesota Department of Transportation TIGER Grant Application  
for the Willmar Rail Connection and Industrial Access Project

Dear Secretary Foxx:

I am writing to express my strong support for the Willmar Rail Connection and Industrial Access Project for consideration in the 2105 TIGER grant program.

Due to the dramatic increases in Bakken oil shipments and those of other commodities, rail traffic in Minnesota has grown significantly over the last few years. As a result, rail safety and improvements are one of my highest priorities. I proposed a significant investment in railway safety in the 2015 legislative session. However, partnership with the federal government will be critical to resolving these issues long-term.

The Willmar Rail project is the result of a public private partnership, including the City of Willmar, Kandiyohi County, Kandiyohi/Willmar Economic Development Commission, MnDOT and BNSF. The project will:

- Reduce the number of train trips that cause traffic delays at rail crossings in Willmar;
- Improve local and regional rail system operational efficiency, fluidity, optionality and connectivity;
- Alleviate increasing congestion and accommodate additional projected growth on the local and regional rail network; and
- Facilitate rail-served development in the Willmar Industrial Park and enable local economic development.

Currently, 10 to 14 trains travel through Willmar on a daily basis. The Willmar Rail Connection and Industrial Access Project will reroute 7 to 10 trains (14 to 20 train trips) around Willmar each day. Every train movement can block

The Honorable Anthony Foxx  
May 27, 2015  
Page 2

crossings in Willmar's downtown business district for up to 30 minutes. The project will significantly improve local residents' access to Willmar's business district.

In addition, the project will improve shippers' access to rail service, providing additional and less costly shipping options. Minnesota's Department of Transportation has estimated that the project will return three times its investment in benefits to this rural community and region.

The innovative project represents the best in public/private collaboration and will enhance the safety, accessibility, efficiency, and reliability of the transportation system in Minnesota and throughout the region.

If you have any additional questions, please contact Minnesota Department of Transportation Commissioner Charlie Zelle at 651-366-4800. Thank you for your consideration of the Willmar Rail Connector and Industrial Access Project for the 2015 TIGER Discretionary Grant Program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark Dayton". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Mark Dayton  
Governor

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-2309

June 2, 2015

The Honorable Anthony Foxx  
Secretary  
United States Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue S.E.  
Washington D.C. 20590

RE: TIGER 2015 – Willmar Rail Connection and Industrial Access Project

Dear Secretary Foxx,

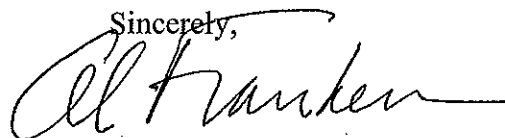
I am writing to express my strong support for the Willmar Rail Connection and Industrial Access Project's application for funding under the TIGER discretionary grant program. As detailed in the application, the project will enhance the safety, accessibility, efficiency, and reliability of the transportation system in Minnesota and throughout the region. The project's new wye and its connected rail spur would alleviate a significant bottleneck in the regional rail network, and enhance safety by reducing the likelihood of road-rail vehicle accidents.

As economic activity has increased in recent years, I have heard frequent concerns about both rail congestion and rail safety issues, and this project would help address both. A TIGER grant would leverage significant non-federal sources, including funding from its private sector beneficiaries. BNSF Railway is providing over one-third of the total project costs.

This project is the product of a long and collaborative process between the Minnesota Department of Transportation, the City of Willmar, Kandiyohi County, the regional Economic Development Commission, and BNSF. While the safety benefits would largely be felt in the Willmar area, the congestion relief would be felt across the state of Minnesota and beyond.

For the reasons listed above, I urge your full consideration of this application. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact Jake Schwitzer of my staff at 651-221-1016 or [jake\\_schwitzer@franken.senate.gov](mailto:jake_schwitzer@franken.senate.gov).

Sincerely,



Al Franken  
United States Senator

AMY KLOBUCHAR  
MINNESOTA

COMMITTEES:  
AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION,  
AND FORESTRY  
COMMERCE, SCIENCE,  
AND TRANSPORTATION  
JOINT ECONOMIC COMMITTEE  
JUDICIARY

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 1, 2015

The Honorable Anthony Foxx  
Secretary, United States Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue S.E.  
Washington D.C. 20590

RE: TIGER 2015 – Willmar Rail Connection and Industrial Access Project

Dear Secretary Foxx:

I am writing to urge your strong consideration for the Willmar Rail Connection and Industrial Access Project for funding under the TIGER discretionary grant program. This project will enhance the safety, accessibility, efficiency, and reliability of the transportation system in Minnesota and throughout the region. This project was developed through a collaborative process between Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT), the city of Willmar, Kandiyohi County, the regional Economic Development Commission and BNSF railroad.

The Willmar Rail Connection and Industrial Access Project will alleviate a significant bottleneck in the regional rail network, expand economic prospects in the region, and increase capacity and operational flexibility in the Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) rail network. MnDOT estimates that the project will return three times its investment in benefits to this rural community and region. Most importantly, this project will enhance safety and reduce the likelihood of road-rail vehicle conflicts.

For the reasons above, I encourage your strong consideration of this application. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Adam Schiff at 612-727-5220 or by email at [adam\\_schiff@klobuchar.senate.gov](mailto:adam_schiff@klobuchar.senate.gov).

Sincerely,  


Amy Klobuchar  
United States Senator

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
WASHINGTON, DC 20515

April 30, 2015

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

Dear Secretary Foxx:

I am writing in strong support of the City of Willmar, Minnesota's application for funding under the Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) Discretionary Grant Program. The proposed Willmar Rail Connector and Industrial Access Project clearly addresses the long-term standards of TIGER by resolving transportation issues that challenge the Willmar Community. First, the Willmar plan will bolster an inadequate transportation infrastructure in order to promote future industrial and economic growth. Second, community safety and livability will be improved. Finally, the plan will be environmentally sound.

These needs and the benefits provided by a successful TIGER application were identified by a five member public-private coalition, composed of the City of Willmar, Kandiyohi County, the Willmar/Kandiyohi County Economic Development Commission, the Minnesota Department of Transportation, and Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) Railway.

The Willmar Rail Connector and Industrial Access Project will solve a key deficiency in the area's rail system. Presently, north-south rail traffic between the Upper Midwest and the Gulf Region does not connect to the BNSF network in Willmar. Because of this, freight trains enter the downtown Willmar Rail Yard, change the direction of the train, and then depart. This procedure blocks streets and pedestrian crossings twice for every train, or they are routed elsewhere through the more congested Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul. Building the connector will reduce rail and automobile congestion in downtown Willmar, will allow for faster rail movement, and will increase efficiency at the Willmar Rail Yard. The project will also generate industrial growth and job creation by enabling the conversion of a decommissioned airport into a rail-served industrial park.

Local partners have already committed over \$118 million to address increasing transportation congestion issues in downtown Willmar. This project will facilitate future growth in the closed airport/ industrial park west of Willmar's population base. The project will meet the objectives of the President's Ladders of Opportunity Initiative by attracting and retaining skilled workers in the region. In addition to projects already completed, the partners have dedicated over \$30 million in direct and in-kind contributions to construct the project and bring about positive, permanent change for the region, state, and national freight system.

DISTRICT OFFICES



Because of the many significant benefits that will result from this project, I strongly encourage your favorable consideration of the Willmar Rail Connector and Industrial Access Project application for the TIGER FY 2015 Discretionary Grant Program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Collin C. Peterson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent loop at the beginning and a long, sweeping underline.

Collin C. Peterson  
Member of Congress



**LYLE J. KOENEN**

Majority Whip  
Senator, District 17  
75 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Phone: (651) 296-5094  
Fax: (651) 225-7585  
E-mail: Sen.Lyle.Koenen@senate.mn



# Senate

State of Minnesota

June 1, 2015

The Honorable Anthony Foxx  
Secretary, U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE  
Washington, DC 20590  
RE: TIGER 2015 – Willmar Rail Connector and Industrial Access Project

Dear Secretary Foxx:

This letter expresses our/my strong support for the Willmar Rail Connector and Industrial Access application for TIGER 2015 funding. The Willmar Rail Connector and Industrial Access Project addresses *four* significant transportation challenges in Willmar, MN: 1) insufficient transportation infrastructure for future expected growth, 2) community livability and safety, 3) environmental conservation, and 4) economic development. These challenges are important to our community and region. Because of these challenges, a five-party public-private partnership was formed to address the concerns and develop a solution. This public-private partnership includes the City of Willmar, Kandiyohi County, Kandiyohi County and the City of Willmar Economic Development Commission, the Minnesota Department of Transportation, and BNSF Railway.

The Willmar Rail Connector and Industrial Access Project solves a key transportation inefficiency in the region's and nation's rail transportation system. Currently, north-south rail traffic moving between the upper Midwest plains and the Gulf States has no direct connection on the BNSF system in Willmar. As a result, freight trains come into the downtown Willmar Rail Yard, change the direction of the train and then pull back out, blocking crossings twice for every one train, or they are routed hundreds of miles out of town through the much more congested Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul. Building this connector will reduce train and vehicular congestion in downtown Willmar caused by blocked crossings, allow for more efficient rail movements, as well as reduce train idling in the often congested Willmar Rail Yard. In addition, this project enables the conversion of a decommissioned airport into a rail-served industrial park, which will generate jobs and economic opportunity for the City of Willmar, Kandiyohi County, and southwestern Minnesota.

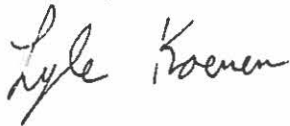
As the economy recovers, the congestion and conflicts in Willmar will only increase, and that's why the local project partners have already committed more than \$118M over the last decade for infrastructure



projects to proactively plan for new development to the west of Willmar. In support of the President's Ladders of Opportunity initiative, development at the industrial park will help attract and retain skilled workers to the region. In addition to projects already completed, the partners have dedicated more than \$30M in direct and in-kind contributions to construct the project and bring about positive and permanent change for the region, state, and national freight network.

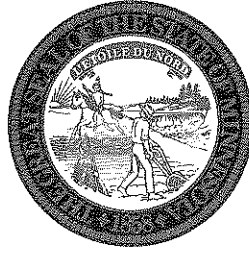
In looking at the numerous benefits associated with this project, I strongly urge your favorable consideration of the Willmar Rail Connector and Industrial Access Project application for the TIGER 2015 Discretionary Grant funding program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lyle Koenen". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned to the right of the word "Sincerely,".

Lyle Koenen  
State Senator, District 17

**Dave Baker**  
State Representative  
Assistant Majority Leader  
District 17B  
Kandiyohi County



# Minnesota House of Representatives

May 29, 2015

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

RE: TIGER 2015 – Willmar Rail Connector and Industrial Access Project

Dear Secretary Foxx,

This letter expresses our/my strong support for the Willmar Rail Connector and Industrial Access application for TIGER 2015 funding. The Willmar Rail Connector and Industrial Access Project addresses four significant transportation challenges in Willmar, MN: 1) insufficient transportation infrastructure for future expected growth, 2) community livability and safety, 3) environmental conservation, and 4) economic development. These challenges are important to our community and region. Because of these challenges, a five-party public-private partnership was formed to address the concerns and develop a solution. This public-private partnership includes the City of Willmar, Kandiyohi County, Kandiyohi County and the City of Willmar Economic Development Commission, the Minnesota Department of Transportation, and BNSF Railway.

The Willmar Rail Connector and Industrial Access Project solves a key transportation inefficiency in the region's and nation's rail transportation system. Currently, north-south rail traffic moving between the upper Midwest plains and the Gulf States has no direct connection on the BNSF system in Willmar. As a result, freight trains come into the downtown Willmar Rail Yard, change the direction of the train and then pull back out, blocking crossings twice for every one train, or they are routed hundreds of miles out of town through the much more congested Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul. Building this connector will reduce train and vehicular congestion in downtown Willmar caused by blocked crossings, allow for more efficient rail movements, as well as reduce train idling in the often congested Willmar Rail Yard. In addition, this project enables the conversion of a decommissioned airport into a rail-served industrial park, which will generate jobs and economic opportunity for the City of Willmar, Kandiyohi County, and southwestern Minnesota.

As the economy recovers, the congestion and conflicts in Willmar will only increase, and that's why the local project partners have already committed more than \$118M over the last decade for infrastructure projects to proactively plan for new development to the west of Willmar. In support of the President's Ladders of Opportunity initiative, development at the industrial park will help attract and retain skilled



workers to the region. In addition to projects already completed, the partners have dedicated more than \$30M in direct and in-kind contributions to construct the project and bring about positive and permanent change for the region, state, and national freight network.

In looking at the numerous benefits associated with this project, I strongly urge your favorable consideration of the Willmar Rail Connector and Industrial Access Project application for the TIGER 2015 Discretionary Grant funding program.

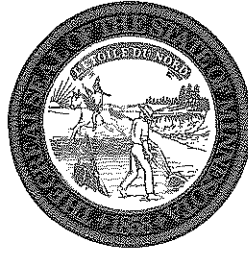
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dave Baker". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Dave Baker  
State Representative  
District 17B

**Tim Miller**  
State Representative

District 17A  
Chippewa, Kandiyohi, Renville and Swift  
Counties



# Minnesota House of Representatives

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

RE: TIGER 2015 – Willmar Rail Connector and Industrial Access Project

Dear Secretary Foxx:

This letter expresses my strong support for the Willmar Rail Connector and Industrial Access application for TIGER 2015 funding. The Willmar Rail Connector and Industrial Access Project addresses *four* significant transportation challenges in Willmar, MN: 1) insufficient transportation infrastructure for future expected growth, 2) community livability and safety, 3) environmental conservation, and 4) economic development. These challenges are important to our community and region. Because of these challenges, a five-party public-private partnership was formed to address the concerns and develop a solution. This public-private partnership includes the City of Willmar, Kandiyohi County, Kandiyohi County and the City of Willmar Economic Development Commission, the Minnesota Department of Transportation, and BNSF Railway.

The Willmar Rail Connector and Industrial Access Project solves a key transportation inefficiency in the region's and nation's rail transportation system. Currently, north-south rail traffic moving between the upper Midwest plains and the Gulf States has no direct connection on the BNSF system in Willmar. As a result, freight trains come into the downtown Willmar Rail Yard, change the direction of the train and then pull back out, blocking crossings twice for every one train, or they are routed hundreds of miles out of town through the much more congested Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul. Building this connector will reduce train and vehicular congestion in downtown Willmar caused by blocked crossings, allow for more efficient rail movements, as well as reduce train idling in the often congested Willmar Rail Yard. In addition, this project enables the conversion of a decommissioned airport into a rail-served industrial park, which will generate jobs and economic opportunity for the City of Willmar, Kandiyohi County, and southwestern Minnesota.

As the economy recovers, the congestion and conflicts in Willmar will only increase, and that's why the local project partners have already committed more than \$118M over the last decade for infrastructure projects to proactively plan for new development to the west of Willmar. In support of the President's Ladders of Opportunity initiative, development at the industrial park will help attract and retain skilled workers to the region. In addition to projects already completed, the partners have dedicated more than \$30M in direct and in-kind contributions to construct the project and bring about positive and permanent change for the region, state, and national freight network.



In looking at the numerous benefits associated with this project, I strongly urge your favorable consideration of the Willmar Rail Connector and Industrial Access Project application for the TIGER 2015 Discretionary Grant funding program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tim Miller". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "T" and "M".

Representative Tim Miller

District 17A

Minnesota House of Representatives



# Minnesota Department of Transportation

395 John Ireland Boulevard  
Saint Paul, MN 55155

June 1, 2015

The Honorable Anthony Foxx  
Secretary, United States Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue S.E.  
Washington D.C. 20590

RE: TIGER 2015 – Willmar Rail Connection and Industrial Access Project

Dear Secretary Foxx,

The Minnesota Department of Transportation wishes to express its full support for the Willmar Rail Connection and Industrial Access Project. This project represents precisely the type of multi-modal transportation infrastructure improvement that is reflected in MnDOT's Mission Statement:

*Plan, build, operate and maintain a safe, accessible, efficient and reliable multimodal transportation system that connects people to destinations and markets throughout the state, regionally and around the world.*

As the application and other letters of support demonstrate in great detail, the project will enhance the safety, accessibility, efficiency, and reliability of the transportation system in Minnesota and throughout the region. In short, the project alleviates a significant bottleneck in the regional rail network, expands economic prospects in an area of our state that is ripe for new business expansion, and increases capacity and operational flexibility in the Burlington Northern Santa Fe rail network. MnDOT will provide \$15 million in State funds towards a successful TIGER Grant.

The objectives of the project are also very well aligned with the unique objectives of the TIGER Discretionary Grant Program. In particular, the project is **innovative**. It is a multimodal, multijurisdictional project that does not fit neatly into any "traditional" state or federal transportation funding program. The project **leverages resources** from its private sector beneficiaries. BNSF is providing over one-third of the total project costs. The project is borne of a true **partnership** between five distinct organizations representing both the public and private sector. Our efforts have clearly demonstrated strong and productive collaboration as evidenced by the project's robust planning history and the resulting integration of the transportation system with other local and regional public service goals. Finally, the project is a **rural investment**, supporting livability and sustainability in rural Minnesota. MnDOT applies a rigorous return-on-investment analysis to all major projects and our projections estimate that this project will return three times its investment in benefits to this rural community and region.

An Equal Opportunity Employer



Thanks once again for your consideration of the Willmar Rail Connector and Industrial Access Project for the 2015 TIGER Discretionary Grant Program. If MnDOT can be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Charles A. Zelle". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Charles" being the most prominent part.

Charles A. Zelle  
Commissioner  
Minnesota Department of Transportation





**Carl R. Ice**  
President and  
Chief Executive Officer

**BNSF Railway Company**  
P.O. Box 961052  
Fort Worth, TX 76161-0052

2650 Lou Menk Drive  
Fort Worth, TX 76131-2830  
(817) 352-1400  
(817) 352-7488 fax  
carl.ice@bnsf.com

June 2, 2015

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

Dear Secretary Foxx:

BNSF Railway strongly supports the efforts of local and state leaders to secure \$15 million in TIGER funding for the Willmar Rail Connection & Industrial Spur. Originally spearheaded locally, this \$46 million project now represents a five-party collaboration of the City of Willmar, Kandiyohi County, their Economic Development Commission, Minnesota Department of Transportation, and BNSF. For its part, **BNSF pledges \$16 million in matching funds.**

This project significantly benefits local, regional, and national stakeholder groups:

- Community livability improvements from reduced train movements and crossing blockages in Willmar, enabling greater westward expansion of the City
- Reduced air quality impacts from emissions at grade crossings
- Economic growth and family-wage job creation for this rural Minnesota city by creating opportunities for rail-served industrial development at a former airport site
- Improved rail system efficiency, flexibility, velocity, and capacity for the northern plains, particularly benefitting agricultural and industrial customers across the BNSF system

FRA provided guidance that this project is likely to receive a NEPA Categorical Exclusion, and the project partners are confident there are no significant environmental, property, or design risks to obligation of TIGER funds or construction. A project MOU is executed, engineering design is nearly complete, and productive discussions with impacted landowners are underway. These community-oriented rail public private partnerships, such as TIGER's recently completed Tower 55 Improvements, are not only economical and dependable. They deliver a unique combination of livability improvements for often-disadvantaged neighboring communities, economic growth opportunities for the local area, and transportation system benefits across a multi-state region. BNSF is committed to this approach, and appreciates your thorough consideration of this important project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Carl R. Ice", written over a white background.

Carl R. Ice  
President and CEO

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

RE: TIGER 2015 – Willmar Rail Connection and Industrial Spur

Dear Secretary Foxx:

I am writing to express Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) support for the Willmar Rail Connection and Industrial Spur application for TIGER 2015 funding. The Minnesota Department of Transportation, BNSF Railway, City of Willmar, Kandiyohi County, and Kandiyohi County and City of Willmar Economic Development Commission have formed a strong public-private partnership to develop a solution that addresses rail safety and economic development concerns in the Willmar area. These partners understand the importance of this project to the region and the State of Minnesota, and have together committed over \$30 million in contributions towards the project.

The project will make Minnesota more competitive by reducing freight congestion not only in Willmar, but around the entire State and the surrounding region. Eliminating this bottleneck in the Willmar rail yard will increase rail network fluidity and reduce congestion on other rail lines throughout the State. BNSF indicates this project will help reduce rail congestion as far away as Galesburg, Ill. Reduced rail congestion means better service for Minnesota businesses that depend on reliable rail service. This project also provides rail access to a new industrial park at a decommissioned airport, generating jobs for Willmar and the surrounding area. The regional Economic Development agency and DEED will almost certainly be involved in the industrial development of this venture. The City currently lacks rail-served industrial land, and this project will provide new opportunities for rail-oriented business growth. The project will also make downtown Willmar more business-friendly through the increased safety and reduced noise and vehicle congestion resulting from decreased train movements in the Willmar yard.

I strongly urge you to favorably consider the Willmar Rail Connection and Industrial Spur application for the 2015 TIGER Discretionary Grant funding project. Approval of this funding grant will ensure a complete and permanent solution to safety, rail capacity, and economic development issues in the region.

Sincerely,



Kevin McKinnon  
Deputy Commissioner



# KANDIYOHI COUNTY PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

1801 E Highway 12 • Willmar, MN 56201  
• Phone 320-235-3266 • Fax 320-235-0055 • E-mail: Highway@co.kandiyohi.mn.us

*Melvin W. Odens, P.E., Public Works Director*

*Jeremy Pfeifer  
Assistant County Engineer*

*Dave Fritz  
Maintenance Engineer*

March 30, 2015

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

RE: TIGER 2015 – Willmar Rail Connector and Industrial Access Project

Dear Secretary Foxx:

This letter expresses our/my strong support for the Willmar Rail Connector and Industrial Access application for TIGER 2015 funding. The Willmar Rail Connector and Industrial Access Project address *four* significant transportation challenges in Willmar, MN:

1. insufficient transportation infrastructure for future expected growth
2. community livability and safety
3. environmental conservation
4. economic development.

These challenges are important to our community and region. Because of these challenges, a five-party public-private partnership was formed to address the concerns and develop a solution. This public-private partnership includes the City of Willmar, Kandiyohi County, Kandiyohi County and the City of Willmar Economic Development Commission, the Minnesota Department of Transportation, and BNSF Railway.

The Willmar Rail Connector and Industrial Access Project solve key transportation inefficiency in the region's and nation's rail transportation system. Currently, north-south rail traffic moving between the upper Midwest plains and the Gulf States has no direct connection on the BNSF system in Willmar. As a result, freight trains come into the downtown Willmar Rail Yard, change the direction of the train and then pull back out, blocking crossings twice for every one train, or they are routed hundreds of miles out of town through the much more congested Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul. Building this connector will reduce train and vehicular congestion in downtown Willmar caused by blocked crossings, allow for more efficient rail movements, as well as reduce train idling in the often congested Willmar Rail Yard. In addition, this project enables the conversion of a decommissioned airport into a rail-served industrial park, which will generate jobs and economic opportunity for the City of Willmar, Kandiyohi County, and southwestern Minnesota.

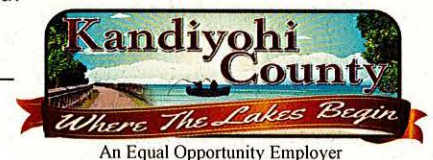
Bruce Nelson  
Operations Supervisor

Steve Lindgren  
Maintenance Supervisor

Paul Bakker  
Financial Supervisor

Loren Engelby  
Public Drainage  
Manager


Nathan Reed  
GLSSWD Superintendent  
(320)796-4523



As the economy recovers, the congestion and conflicts in Willmar will only increase, and that's why the local project partners have already committed more than \$118 million over the last decade for infrastructure projects to proactively plan for new development to the west of Willmar. In support of the President's Ladders of Opportunity initiative, development at the industrial park will help attract and retain skilled workers to the region. In addition to projects already completed, the partners have dedicated more than \$30 million in direct and in-kind contributions to construct the project and bring about positive and permanent change for the region, state, and national freight network.

In looking at the numerous benefits associated with this project, I strongly urge your favorable consideration of the Willmar Rail Connector and Industrial Access Project application for the TIGER 2015 Discretionary Grant funding program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jim Butterfield". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Jim Butterfield, Chairman  
Kandiyohi County Board of Commissioners





## **MAYOR AND COUNCIL**

City Office Building  
Box 755  
Willmar, Minnesota 56201  
320-235-4913  
FAX 320-235-4917

May 1, 2015

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

RE: TIGER 2015 – Willmar Rail Connector and Industrial Access Project

Dear Secretary Foxx:

This letter expresses support by the City of Willmar for the Willmar Rail Connector and Industrial Access application for TIGER 2015 funding. The Willmar Rail Connector and Industrial Access Project addresses *four* significant transportation challenges in Willmar, MN: 1) insufficient transportation infrastructure for future expected growth, 2) community livability and safety, 3) environmental conservation, and 4) economic development. These challenges are important to our community and region. Because of these challenges, a five-party public-private partnership was formed to address the concerns and develop a solution. This public-private partnership includes the City of Willmar, Kandiyohi County, Kandiyohi County and the City of Willmar Economic Development Commission, the Minnesota Department of Transportation, and BNSF Railway.

The Willmar Rail Connector and Industrial Access Project solves a key transportation inefficiency in the region's and nation's rail transportation system. Currently, north-south rail traffic moving between the upper Midwest plains and the Gulf States has no direct connection on the BNSF system in Willmar. As a result, freight trains come into the downtown Willmar Rail Yard, change the direction of the train and then pull back out, blocking crossings twice for every one train, or they are routed hundreds of miles out of town through the much more congested Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul. Building this connector will reduce train and vehicular congestion in downtown Willmar caused by blocked crossings, allow for more efficient rail movements, as well as reduce train idling in the often congested Willmar Rail Yard. In addition, this project enables the conversion of a decommissioned airport into a rail-served industrial park, which will generate jobs and economic opportunity for the City of Willmar, Kandiyohi County, and southwestern Minnesota.

As the economy recovers, the congestion and conflicts in Willmar will only increase, and that's why the local project partners have already committed more than \$118M

over the last decade for infrastructure projects to proactively plan for new development to the west of Willmar. In support of the President's Ladders of Opportunity initiative, development at the industrial park will help attract and retain skilled workers to the region. In addition to projects already completed, the partners have dedicated more than \$30M in direct and in-kind contributions to construct the project and bring about positive and permanent change for the region, state, and national freight network.

In looking at the numerous benefits associated with this project, I strongly urge your favorable consideration of the Willmar Rail Connector and Industrial Access Project application for the TIGER 2015 Discretionary Grant funding program.

Sincerely,

**CITY OF WILLMAR**



Marv Calvin  
Mayor

js



**WILLMAR POLICE DEPARTMENT  
CHIEF OF POLICE**

2201 23rd ST. NE  
Suite 102  
WILLMAR, MN 56201-9566  
320-214-6700; 320-235-2244 V/TDD  
FAX 320-231-6556

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

RE: TIGER 2015 – Willmar Rail Connector and Industrial Access Project

Dear Secretary Foxx:

This letter expresses my strong support for the Willmar Rail Connector and Industrial Access application for TIGER 2015 funding. The Willmar Rail Connector and Industrial Access Project addresses some significant transportation challenges in Willmar, but I will focus on the public safety aspect.

The City of Willmar is geographically divided by the east / west rail lines through our community and also has a north / south line extending along the edge of our city limits. Due to placement of the Willmar Rail Yard, freight trains changing directions must stop and block vehicle traffic while switching tracks or attaching rail cars. Often the switching takes place with the trains having to block the crossings twice for each train, causing vehicle congestion and delay.

Within the city limits of Willmar, there are 11 separate streets that cross the railroad tracks. There are currently only two bridge crossings available within Willmar city limits for emergency vehicles to access the separate areas of town. An additional crossing is available about ¼ mile out of the city, but the limited crossings cause a delay in response by emergency services, which must often take a several block detour or routinely detour to an elevated crossing to ensure a timely response to an emergency.

The Willmar Rail Yard is also located next to a state highway and our downtown business district. The increase in trains carrying hazardous cargo through our city also creates additional concerns of security and safety to the public in those areas.

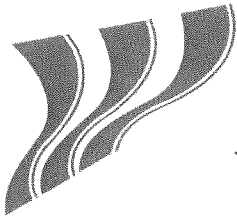
Under the proposed Willmar Rail Connector and Industrial Access application, the number of trains that could congest traffic and block intersections could be greatly reduced. The proposal also has the ability to limit the number of railcars carrying hazardous materials directly through our populated district and instead be rerouted to an industrial area. The overall benefit to our department would be the potential for decreased response times for emergency calls for service.

I strongly urge your favorable consideration of the Willmar Rail Connector and Industrial Access Project application for the TIGER 2015 Discretionary Grant funding program.

Sincerely,

Chief Jim Felt  
Willmar, MN Police Department





WILLMAR



**WILLMAR FIRE DEPARTMENT**  
**FIRE CHIEF**  
**515 SW 2<sup>ND</sup> ST**

**WILLMAR, MN 56201-0932**  
**320-235-1354**

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

RE: TIGER 2015 – Willmar Rail Connector and Industrial Access Project

Dear Secretary Foxx:

On behalf of the City of Willmar Fire Department and the citizens it serves, I strongly support the Willmar Rail Connector and Industrial Access application for the TIGER 2015 funding for the Willmar wye/by-pass project that will divert numerous trains from the Wilmar yard. The Willmar Rail Connector and Industrial Access Project addresses' a significant transportation challenge in relation to community livability and safety which is of the utmost importance to our community and region. The reduction of train traffic in and out of the yard will be a great benefit as it will reduce crossing closures at numerous rail crossings throughout the city. This reduction in crossing closures assures that the fire department has multiple routes of travel when responding to calls for service. Time is of essence when responding to a structure fire; fires triple in size every minute leaving little time for any delays. Currently the fire department only has one route of travel which assures us we will not be delayed by one of the numerous trains which transverses the community. Unfortunately this route is not centrally located causing significant delays if we have to back track to it in the event the other crossings are blocked by rail traffic.

Due to the many challenges, a five-party public-private partnership was formed to address the concerns and develop a solution. This public-private partnership includes the City of Willmar, Kandiyohi County, Kandiyohi County and the City of Willmar Economic Development Commission, the Minnesota Department of Transportation, and BNSF Railway. The Willmar Rail Connector and Industrial Access Project solves a key transportation inefficiency in the region's and nation's rail transportation system. Currently, north-south rail traffic moving between the upper Midwest plains and the Gulf States has no direct connection on the BNSF system in Willmar. As a result, freight trains come into the downtown Willmar Rail Yard, change the direction of the train and then pull back out, blocking crossings twice for every one train, or they are routed hundreds of miles out of town through the much more congested Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul. Building this connector will reduce train and vehicle congestion in downtown Willmar caused by blocked crossings, allow for more efficient rail movements, as well as reduce train idling in the often congested Willmar Rail Yard. In addition, this project enables the

conversion of a decommissioned airport into a rail-served industrial park, which will generate jobs and economic opportunity for the City of Willmar, Kandiyohi County, and southwestern Minnesota.

As the economy recovers, the congestion and conflicts in Willmar will only increase, and that's why the local project partners have already committed more than \$118M over the last decade for infrastructure projects to proactively plan for new development to the west of Willmar. In support of the President's Ladders of Opportunity initiative, development at the industrial park will help attract and retain skilled workers to the region. In addition to projects already completed, the partners have dedicated more than \$30M in direct and in-kind contributions to construct the project and bring about positive and permanent change for the region, state, and national freight network.

In looking at the numerous benefits associated with this project, I strongly urge your favorable consideration of the Willmar Rail Connector and Industrial Access Project application for the TIGER 2015 Discretionary Grant funding program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Gary H", followed by a horizontal line extending to the right.

Gary Hendrickson  
Willmar Fire Chief



4/14/2015

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

RE: TIGER 2015 – Willmar Rail Connector and Industrial Access Project

Dear Secretary Foxx,

It is my pleasure to write a letter in support of the Willmar Rail Connector and Industrial Access application for Tiger 2015 funding.

This project addresses four transportation concerns in Willmar, Minnesota: 1) insufficient transportation infrastructure for future growth 2) the reduction of train traffic in and out of yard will be a great benefit to the community for many safety reasons, as well as reducing crossing closures at CSAH 5 at 19<sup>th</sup> Street NW, 10<sup>th</sup> Street SW and 7<sup>th</sup> Street SW which would be important for emergency vehicle routing 3) environmental conservation and 4) economic development are concerns as well. These questions are vital concerns for our community and region.

I fully support these efforts and would welcome any reduction in crossing closures that would benefit Emergency Services vehicle response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brad Hanson", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

*Brad Hanson* EM, CCNREMT-P, RHPC  
Manager  
Willmar Ambulance Service  
Deputy Emergency Management Director- City of Willmar  
Environmental Safety Officer & Emergency Preparedness Coordinator

May 20, 2015

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

RE: TIGER 2015 – Willmar Rail Connector and Industrial Access Project

Dear Secretary Foxx:

The City of Willmar and Kandiyohi County ask that you partner with us as we endeavor to dramatically improve the rail transportation infrastructure that allows us to grow the economy in our portion of Minnesota. We use the term partner because local government has spent over \$118 million preparing this regional center for substantial economic growth. Our public-private partnership already includes the BNSF Railway, the Kandiyohi County and City of Willmar Economic Development Commission, the City of Willmar, Kandiyohi County and the State of Minnesota Department of Transportation. The City of Willmar has invested heavily in the acquisition and preparation of a new industrial park. The availability of rail service in the industrial park allows recruitment of rail dependent heavy industry that provide jobs paying well above the present average weekly wage found in the community. In support of the President's Ladders of Opportunity initiative, development at the industrial park will help attract and retain skilled workers to the region.

The Willmar Rail Connector and Industrial Access Project addresses *four* significant transportation challenges important to our community and region: 1) insufficient transportation infrastructure for future expected growth, 2) community livability and safety, 3) environmental conservation and 4) economic development.

The Willmar Rail Connector and Industrial Access Project address transportation inefficiency in the region's and nation's rail transportation system. Currently, there is an operational impediment in the Willmar downtown Rail Yard that causes inefficient operation or the cars are routed hundreds of miles out of town through much more congested areas of Minneapolis and St. Paul.

I strongly urge your favorable consideration of the Willmar Rail Connector and Industrial Access Project application for the TIGER 2015 Discretionary Grant funding program.

Sincerely,



Steven C. Renquist  
Executive Director

**Willmar Township  
4350 15<sup>th</sup> St. SW  
Willmar, MN 56201**

April 27, 2015

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

RE: TIGER 2015 – Willmar Rail Connection and Industrial Spur

Dear Secretary Foxx:

This letter expresses the strong support of the Willmar Rail Connection and Industrial Spur application for TIGER 2015 funding. The Willmar Rail Connection and Industrial Spur addresses *four* significant transportation challenges in Willmar, MN: insufficient transportation infrastructure for future expected growth; community livability and safety; environmental conservation; and economic development. These challenges are important to our community and region. Because of these challenges a five party public-private partnership was formed to address the concerns and develop a solution. This public-private partnership includes the City of Willmar, Kandiyohi County, Kandiyohi County and the City of Willmar Economic Development Commissions, Minnesota Department of Transportation and BNSF Railway. The proposed project will be within Willmar Township.

The Willmar Rail Connection and Industrial Spur will solve a key transportation inefficiency in the region's and nation's rail transportation system. Currently north-south rail traffic moving between the upper Midwest plains and the Gulf States has no direct connection to the BNSF system in Willmar. As a result, freight trains come into the downtown Willmar Rail Yard, change the direction of the train and then pull back out, blocking crossings twice for every one train or they are routed hundreds of miles out of town through the much more congested Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul. Building this connection will allow for more efficient rail movement as well as reduce train and vehicular congestion in downtown Willmar caused by blocked crossings and will reduce train idling in the often congested Willmar Rail Yard. In addition, this project enables the conversion of a decommissioned airport into a rail served industrial park which will generate jobs and economic opportunity for the City of Willmar, Kandiyohi County and the western half of the state of Minnesota.



As the economy recovers, the congestion caused in Willmar and the potential positive economic and environmental impacts of the Project will only increase and that's why the project partners have committed over \$30M in direct and in-kind contributions to solve this concern and bring about positive and permanent change for the region, state and national freight network. The Township strongly supports this project and in support thereof, the Township intends to turn over part of a township road to Kandiyohi County to permit the County to redesign the road to be consistent with the intent of the project.

Past economic assessments of the Project have concluded that the Project would result in a Benefit Cost Ratio of 3.19 at a 7 percent discount rate. This demonstrates that there are more than three times the benefits for every dollar invested of total Project costs.

The Project will connect with Marshall to the Morris Subdivisions of the BNSF rail network, allowing 7 to 10 trains daily to avoid pulling into the rail yard in downtown Willmar. The reduction of train traffic through downtown Willmar improves the local quality of life by reducing delays at crossings, improving safety, reducing noise and emissions, and improving the reliability of fire, police, and ambulance response. This investment also creates both rail capacity and operational flexibility, and will allow for BNSF to relieve one of the more congested areas on the northern part of its system.

In looking at the numerous benefits associated with this project, our Township Board strongly urges your favorable consideration of the Willmar Rail Connection and Industrial Spur application for the TIGER 2015 Discretionary Grant funding program.

Sincerely,

**Willmar Township**



Donavon C. Monson, Chairman

cc: City of Willmar  
County of Kandiyohi  
Economic Development Commission



# MID-MINNESOTA DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

*Serving the People of Region Six East*

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April 15, 2015

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

RE: TIGER 2015 – Willmar Rail Connector and Industrial Access Project

Dear Secretary Foxx:

The Mid-Minnesota Regional Development Commission wishes to strongly express our support of the Willmar Rail Connection and Industrial Access Project application for TIGER 2015 funding. As a regional planning agency, we see a significant need for this project for public safety, and economic development opportunities. The project will also provide the City of Willmar's central business district with much improved traffic flow and livability conditions. Lastly, the project will result in environmental conservation. The project will be a great benefit to the City and the operation of the BNSF. The City of Willmar is the primary regional center for a number of counties in Southwest Minnesota, thus these improvements will be an economic benefit to the entire region.

The Willmar Rail Connection and Industrial Spur project has a public-private partnership that includes the City of Willmar, Kandiyohi County and the City of Willmar Economic Development Commission, Kandiyohi County, Minnesota Department of Transportation, and BNSF Railway. All these partners see the tremendous benefits that will come from the project. It is for that reason they have together already committed over \$118 million during the last decade for infrastructure projects to proactively plan for new development on the west side of Willmar. In support of the President's Ladders of Opportunity initiative, development at the industrial park will help attract and retain skilled workers to the region. The partners for this project have also agreed to dedicate more than \$30 million in direct and in-kind contributions to construct the project. The investment will result in permanent positive change for the region, state, and the national freight network.

The Willmar Rail Connection and Industrial Access Project solves a key transportation inefficiency in the region's and nation's rail transportation system. Currently north-south rail traffic moving between the upper Midwest plains and the Gulf States has no direct connection on the BNSF system in Willmar. As a result, freight trains come into the downtown Willmar rail yard, change the direction of the train and then pull back out, blocking crossings twice for each



train. Some trains are routed hundreds of miles out of town through the much more congested Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul. Building this connector will allow for more efficient rail movement as well as reduce train and vehicular congestion in downtown Willmar. The safety and uninterrupted travel of walkers and bicyclists will be improved on identified trail routes crossing the railroad within the downtown. Less train and vehicle idling will lead to energy savings. In addition, this project enables the conversion of a decommissioned airport into a rail served industrial park which will generate jobs and economic opportunity for the City of Willmar, Kandiyohi County, and the western half of the state of Minnesota. The City is in much need for new industrial land, as currently other industrial park land is occupied.

In looking at the numerous benefits associated with this project, I strongly urge your favorable consideration of the Willmar Rail Connection and Industrial Access Project application for the TIGER 2015 Discretionary Grant funding program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Donn Winckler".

Donn Winckler  
Executive Director  
Mid-Minnesota Development Commission



2104 Hwy 12 E | Willmar, MN 56201  
phone: 320 • 235 • 0300 | fax: 320 • 231 • 1948  
website: [www.willmarareachamber.com](http://www.willmarareachamber.com)  
email: [chamber@willmarareachamber.com](mailto:chamber@willmarareachamber.com)

April 14, 2015

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

RE: TIGER 2015 – Willmar Rail Connector and Industrial Access Project

Dear Secretary Foxx,

The Willmar Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce is providing this letter of our support for the Willmar Rail Connector and Industrial Access application for the TIGER 2015 Funding. Knowing that this project will reduce the number of trains coming in from the NW/SW and out of the City to the SW/NW it will also reduce vehicle conflicts and noise, making the City safer and more livable. In addition, in the bigger picture it solves a key transportation inefficiency in the region's and nation's rail transportation system.

The Willmar Lakes Area Chamber represents over 600 business and professional members throughout Kandiyohi County. As you may know, the Willmar Lakes Area is a regional center for many entities including hospitality businesses and attractions, health care, business and industry, agriculture, various forms of government and education. In addition to enhancing the quality of life in our area, we promote and advocate for the area wide business community, which in turn, contributes to the strong tax base in the Willmar Lakes Area as well as the State of Minnesota.

We support the shared vision and mission of the five-party public-private collaborative partnership between the City of Willmar, Kandiyohi County, Kandiyohi County and City of Willmar Economic Development Commission, the Minnesota Department of Transportation and the BNSF Railway. We look forward to the Federal Government becoming the sixth collaborative partner associated with this important project. Together this will continue to drive economic development; allowing the region to become globally competitive, increase livability and safety as well as assisting us in retaining and attracting much needed economic development prospects now and in the future. The Chamber of Commerce offers a firm commitment of both time and program resources if necessary to ensure the success of this innovative proposal.

If the Willmar Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce can be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact us. We look forward to receiving the announcement that the TIGER Funding for this project has been approved.

On behalf of the Board of Directors and membership,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ken Warner'.

Ken Warner, President  
Willmar Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce



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

RE: TIGER 2015 – Willmar Rail Connector and Industrial Access Project

Dear Secretary Foxx:

This letter expresses our strong support for the Willmar Rail Connector and Industrial Access application for TIGER 2015 funding. The major reason we support the project is its capacity to introduce more and better paying jobs to the region. The portions of the population we represent has benefited from the increase of jobs in the area and now wish to continue our access to more challenging and better paying jobs made available by the introduction of heavy industry in the local industrial park. The proposed Willmar Wye project not only removes the congestion created by local operational constraints in the rail system but provides a rail spur into the new industrial park which makes the recruitment of heavy industry more feasible. The better jobs created by these companies, in our opinion, match the President's Ladders of Opportunity initiative.

The Willmar Rail Connector and Industrial Access Project addresses *four* significant transportation challenges in Willmar, MN: 1) insufficient transportation infrastructure for future expected growth, 2) community livability and safety, 3) environmental conservation, and 4) economic development. These challenges are important to our community and region. Because of these challenges, a five-party public-private partnership was formed to address the concerns and develop a solution. This public-private partnership includes the City of Willmar, Kandiyohi County, Kandiyohi County and the City of Willmar Economic Development Commission, the Minnesota Department of Transportation, and BNSF Railway.

As the economy recovers, the rail traffic congestion and conflicts in Willmar will only increase, and companies will locate where there is unfettered movement of material. That's why the local project has our support and, we hope, your support. The positive impact of this project is far-reaching as it grows the economy and the likely reduction of rail traffic now routed through the Twin City metropolitan area. In looking at the numerous benefits I strongly urge your favorable consideration of the Willmar Rail Connector and Industrial Access Project application for the TIGER 2015 Discretionary Grant funding program.

Sincerely,

Toni Sing  
Chairperson



# Minnesota Commercial Railway

**John Gohmann, President, Chairman**

14047 Petronella Drive, Suite 201  
Libertyville, IL 60048  
847-549-0486 \* 847-549-0485 fax  
[johnghohmann@msn.com](mailto:johnghohmann@msn.com)

May 26, 2015

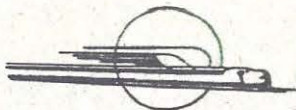
The Honorable Anthony Foxx  
Secretary, U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE  
Washington, DC 20590

RE: TIGER 2015 – Willmar Rail Connector and Industrial Access Project

Dear Secretary Foxx:

This letter expresses our/my strong support for the Willmar Rail Connector and Industrial Access application for TIGER 2015 funding. The Willmar Rail Connector and Industrial Access Project addresses *four* significant transportation challenges in Willmar, MN: 1) insufficient transportation infrastructure for future expected growth, 2) community livability and safety, 3) environmental conservation, and 4) economic development. These challenges are important to our community and region. Because of these challenges, a five-party public-private partnership was formed to address the concerns and develop a solution. This public-private partnership includes the City of Willmar, Kandiyohi County, Kandiyohi County and the City of Willmar Economic Development Commission, the Minnesota Department of Transportation, and BNSF Railway.

The Willmar Rail Connector and Industrial Access Project solves a key transportation inefficiency in the region's and nation's rail transportation system. Currently, north-south rail traffic moving between the upper Midwest plains and the Gulf States has no direct connection on the BNSF system in Willmar. As a result, freight trains come into the downtown Willmar Rail Yard, change the direction of the train and then pull back out, blocking crossings twice for every one train, or they are routed hundreds of miles out of town through the much more congested Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul. Building this connector will reduce train and vehicular congestion in downtown Willmar caused by blocked crossings, allow for more efficient rail movements, as well as reduce train idling in the often congested Willmar Rail Yard. In addition, this project enables the conversion of a decommissioned airport into a rail-served industrial park, which will generate jobs and economic opportunity for the City of Willmar, Kandiyohi County, and southwestern Minnesota.



*Efficient, competitive and caring rail service. Subsidiary- Commercial  
Transload of Minnesota – transloading, trucking, warehousing.*

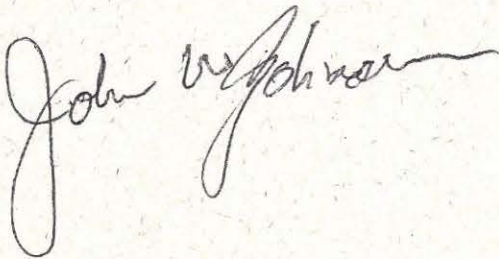


As the economy recovers, the congestion and conflicts in Willmar will only increase, and that's why the local project partners have already committed more than \$118M over the last decade for infrastructure projects to proactively plan for new development to the west of Willmar. In support of the President's Ladders of Opportunity initiative, development locomotive power, and run around the train, place the power on the other end, and then proceed.. Each such procedure can take up to 90 minutes.. In addition to the crossing blockage at Wilmar twice by the same train, moving at slow speeds, this effectively reduces the capacity of the BNSF lines between Kansas City, Lincoln, Omaha and Sioux City to the mainline east west line at Wilmar..And in turn, this requires more routing of trains between Kansas City and points South and west via an already congested Galesburg, Ill classification yard and BNSF's mainline between Galesburg and the Twin at the industrial park will help attract and retain skilled workers to the region. In addition to projects already completed, the partners have dedicated more than \$30M in direct and in-kind contributions to construct the project and bring about positive and permanent change for the region, state, and national freight network.

Our own railroad has been adversely impacted by capacity constraints related to the current poor connection at Wilmar.. Presently, through trains connecting from the BNSF Lincoln - Omaha - Sioux City Lines have to pull into this yard, then cut off their Cities. We have seen our customer cars delayed several days in high peak times as a result.

In looking at the numerous benefits associated with this project, I strongly urge your favorable consideration of the Willmar Rail Connector and Industrial Access Project application for the TIGER 2015 Discretionary Grant funding program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John W. Johnson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "J".