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**Theodore Roosevelt Expressway Association Report**

**1 St Quarter 2016**

2016 has started off with good strides for the Theodore Roosevelt Expressway Association (TREA). As this report will discuss, there are some very positive moves for the goal of Four-Lanes for the Theodore Roosevelt Expressway (U.S. 85).

I, along with fellow staff members of the Port to Plains Alliance, met with Federal Transportation officials in Washington DC in February to discuss the Federal Transportation Bill and the positives it holds for rural transportation, including the designation of Critical Rural Fright Corridors. The focus of the trip was to expedite the USDOT/FHWA guidance for state DOT’s to designate Critical Rural Freight Corridors (CRFC’s), stressing the assets of the corridor that need an efficient freight system to move agricultural, energy, manufactured products, and people safely.

**Designation of Critical Rural Freight Corridors**

* **Each state may designate a maximum of 150 miles of highway or 20% of the primary highway freight system mileage in the state, whichever is greater, as CRFCs.**

The Ports to Plains Alliance will be back in DC again the week of April 18-22 2016 to continue to message the importance of this corridor.

NDDOT is working through the steps of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the expansion of U.S. 85 from Watford City to I-94 at Belfield N.D.  Based on the input from the scoping meetings held last fall, a Purpose and Need has been developed and coordinated with the Lead and Cooperating Agencies. Based on that Purpose and Need, the project team is currently screening and developing alternatives for the project corridor and the Long X Bridge as well as flexible design options for the unincorporated community of Fairfield and the Badlands Area. Once these alternatives have been developed NDDOT will be bringing them to an Alternatives Pubic Workshop to generate more ideas and get comments on the proposed alternatives and options. The intent is to hold that public workshop early this summer on the four lane 85 project. The project teams will also be completing surveys and studies that were not completed last year.

An application to replace the Long X Bridge is being submitted by NDDOT under the FASTLANE Grant program. At this point NDDOT is planning on a rural small project since they are pulling the bridge out of the larger project of four-laning Highway 85.  The entire project is still under environmental review, but they hope to have the bridge portion ready to meet the required construction start date for the grant.  Plus, the Long X Bridge is on the NDDOT 5-year State Transportation Improvement Program and that component is required to be eligible.

Early estimates are ranging from $50-60M for the Long X Bridge project. NDDOT is still waiting to get a final cost estimate on the project and it may be that NDDOT can work in elements to make it eligible for a large project.  It would certainly bring home a larger potential award.  We will continue to stress on the rural component.

Talkin Trash: in response to the request from the NDDOT, the Theodore Roosevelt Expressway Association has been to working with the NDDOT and supporting organizations along the U.S. corridor including communities, state wide civic organizations, and other membership organizations to clean up the corridor. A week has been set aside in April (25-30 2016) to clean and free the highway right away and communities of the problems with litter along U.S. 85.

The request below came from the NDDOT:

*Hope everything is well.  We know that this corridor is important to you and your organization as well as the DOT.  We had the opportunity to drive a portion of the corridor the other day from Watford City to Williston and one item that jumped out at us is the amount of trash along this corridor.  I wanted to reach out to you to see if your organization would be willing to take the lead and organize an effort to pick up the trash along this whole corridor.  We would be willing to help with this effort but to be honest there is just a lot of trash to pick up.  If you are willing please coordinate with Larry Gangl – Dickinson District Engineer and Joel Wilt - Williston District Engineer.*

*Thanks*

*Ron Henke*

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  Our focus in the next few months will be working with legislators, federal and state authorities in the ten membership states and the countries of Canada and Mexico of the Ports-to-Plains Alliance, stressing the importance of transportation and rural economic growth. The TREA will also work with member communities on marketing economic development opportunity along the corridor highlighting the strengths of the regions.

I do want to thank the TREA membership for the continued support. I have tried to attend scheduled meetings and am aware I have been unable to attend all so please contact me if you need me to stop in for an update to your community or organization

Cal Klewin

**Theodore Roosevelt Expressway Association**

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