

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 18, 2017

The Honorable Elaine L. Chao  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Chao:

We write in support of the proposal led by the University of Maine to form a University Transportation Center called the *Transportation Infrastructure Durability Center* (TIDC) in Standard Federal Region 1. The research identified in the proposal titled "Transportation Infrastructure Durability Center: Extending the Life of Our Transportation Assets" aims to help state departments of transportation save money in lean times by building bridges, roads, and rail lines that last longer.

The American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) estimates that the U.S. economy will lose \$4 trillion in GDP and 2.5 million jobs by 2025 due to funding constraints for transportation infrastructure. New England's transportation infrastructure is especially problematic. Poor road conditions in these states can cost motorists \$584 per person per year.

According to the applicants, TIDC will ensure investments in transportation infrastructure are maximized and efficient. Throughout the five-year program, faculty and student researchers from six New England universities will participate: University of Maine (lead), University of Rhode Island, University of Connecticut, University of Massachusetts Lowell, University of Vermont, and Western New England University. Research will be focused on strengthening state DOT research programs and other national research efforts, guided by an advisory board of DOT representatives from five New England states, the President of AASHTO, and the President of ASCE's Transportation and Development Institute. Several New England-based industrial partners will be engaged throughout the research.

Member universities have an extensive record of accomplishments in research, education, and technology transfer as it relates to transportation infrastructure. TIDC aims to build on successes and continue to support Region 1 state DOT initiatives while introducing new technology and information to reduce cost and improve the health of Region 1 transportation infrastructure. We strongly support these kinds of regional efforts to help increase cost-effectiveness of transportation infrastructure. We believe this program will do so through monitoring and assessment, new systems for longevity and constructability, and connectivity for enhanced asset and performance management while promoting transportation workforce development.

Thank you for your time and consideration, subject to all applicable laws and regulations, of the University of Maine's proposal. Please contact us or have your staff call Katie Seelen at (202) 224-9238 or Christopher Albert at (401) 528-5200 should you have questions or concerns.



Susan M. Collins  
United States Senator

Sincerely,



Jack Reed  
United States Senator