



North Dakota Transportation Committee

Chairman Dan Ruby

Thursday, November 12, 2015

Testimony by Dr. Dean Bresciani, NDSU President

Good morning Chairman Ruby and Committee members. My name is Dr. Dean Bresciani, and as the President of North Dakota State University I appreciate the opportunity to talk with you this morning about administrative authority for the NDSU Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute being shifted from NDSU to the North Dakota Department of Transportation. Let me be clear that I'm here to share my concern for such a proposal, as I don't believe it is in any way in the best interests of our state.

As you may know, NDSU a few years ago became the first and remains the only North Dakota university to enter the top tier of all colleges and universities in the nation, both public and private, as measured by both the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education and the National Science Foundation. Those two organizations are generally recognized as the two most preeminent objective measures of higher education in the country. Since that time, NDSU has continued to rise in national rankings and now is the leading university not just in our own state but in our five state area of ND, SD, MT, WY and ID. During that same period we have become the school of choice for both ND high school graduates attending college on a full-time basis, and out of state high school graduates attending college on a full-time basis.

I offer all that as a context for the historic contributions we are making to our state, region and nation as a major, nationally recognized research university. In fact, many of those contributions are only possible because we are a major, nationally recognized research university. NDSU's Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute (known as UGPTI) is an exemplary illustration of that point.

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Much if not most of the federal research and support of transportation and logistics in this country is done through transportation institutes positioned within our nation's leading research universities. Such positioning offers focused, independent and highly efficient research which informs constituency groups certainly including but are not limited to the various state departments of transportation around the country -- such as our own. Worth noting, research is a core function of what research universities do, while the mission and core functions of state transportation departments are considerably different.

Again, I would also want to note that NDSU's UGPTI isn't just a good illustration of that point, it is an exemplary one. In fact, just a few years ago, the U.S. Department of Transportation temporarily froze its university-based research resources while it took careful stock of the various university-based transportation institutes around the country. At the end of the day, they redistributed those resources to a smaller segment, but the best, of those institutes. The UGPTI was recognized as one of the most successful and our state benefited by a substantial increase in federal transportation research funding. Those resources would not have been available before much less after that redistribution had UGPTI not been a part of NDSU. That's just one, but a very good example, of the advisability of keeping UGPTI closely and integrally tied to NDSU.

Simply put, I'm unaware of any productivity or efficiency gains to be had by the realignment that has been suggested, but it is clear to me that there would be substantial liabilities for doing so, both in the quality and quantity of work that would be possible and the broad and substantial sources of funding -- that comes from outside our state -- which would not be accessible if the Institute was not part of NDSU.

Thank you for your time and consideration of my comments, and I'd be happy to take any questions.