



WESTERN DAKOTA ENERGY ASSOCIATION

March 9, 2021

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Testimony of:
Geoff Simon, Lobbyist #144
in support of HB 2020
House Appropriations Committee
Education and Environment Division

Chairman Monson and Committee members:

On behalf of the city and county members of the Western Dakota Energy Association, we wish to express strong support for the appropriations request of the Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute and the North Dakota Agricultural Weather Network.

WDEA has a longstanding working relationship with UGPTI's Local Technical Assistance Program (LTAP), and the training and education it provides to our members. Counties in western North Dakota receive tremendous benefit from the Geographic Roadway Inventory Tool (GRIT), as well as the information found in UGPTI's local road and bridge needs study. UGPTI and NDAWN have also been active partners in WDEA's development of the Wise Roads project (<https://www.ndenergy.org/Issues/Wise-Roads>), which is aimed at minimizing weather-related disruptions to heavy oilfield truck traffic.

LTAP staff have worked closely with county road superintendents to maximize the value of data collected through the Wise Roads network of weather stations. We're engaged with LTAP in a research project which involves placing moisture and temperature sensors in gravel roads to better determine when frost or load restrictions need to be placed on roads and when those restrictions can be lifted. NDAWN has provided the technical expertise to help WDEA launch the Wise Roads project, and continues to work closely with us to maximize the value of the huge volume of weather data we collect.

Both UGPTI and NDAWN are delivering valuable services to our agriculture and energy sectors, and are also engaged in cutting-edge research, aimed at supporting the state's major industries' through innovation and development of better management tools to improve productivity and move commerce more efficiently. There is no better example of this than UGPTI's supplemental request to take advantage of the state's rapidly-developing unmanned aerial vehicle network. In much the same way the use of rich weather data has facilitated improvements in the movement of heavy oilfield truck traffic, the remote sensing potential of drones, especially when equipped with beyond visual line of sight capabilities, will greatly enhance coverage and efficiency of transportation planning.

WDEA urges the House Appropriations Committee to approve the budgetary items requested in SB 2020, and to restore the 5% reduction recommended by the governor.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

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