

Testimony in Favor of House Bill 1419
March 26, 2021
Senate Political Subdivisions Committee
Bill Wocken on behalf of the North Dakota League of Cities

Good Morning Mr. Chairman and members of the Senate Political Subdivisions Committee. For the record, my name is Bill Wocken and I am testifying in favor of House Bill 1419 on behalf of the North Dakota League of Cities.

As you are aware, House Bill 1419 allows cities or counties to collect an infrastructure fee in place of special assessments levied to pay for maintenance of existing roads and infrastructure. This bill came before the Sixty-sixth Legislative Assembly but there were some unanswered questions. The Interim Taxation Committee and the City of Bismarck have made a good attempt to study those questions during the interim period.

Many of us have experienced the unwelcome mailing from the city saying your street needs to have a mill and overlay and the cost will be considerable. You may concede that this repair is needed but the realities of paying for the work are a bit overwhelming. The bill is usually quite high, interest is charged on the unpaid balance, it comes at the same time as the property tax statement and it's Christmas time!

Bismarck has been looking at alternatives to special assessment charges for several years with a citizen's committee and the infrastructure fee concept was the most favored solution. It allows a citizen to pay the cost of their street maintenance on a manageable and predictable basis that can be more budget friendly.

We believe that if a city and its citizens are willing to try this new approach to infrastructure improvements no one will be hurt and everyone may potentially benefit. The North Dakota League of Cities supports the idea of an additional option to address special assessments and it respectfully requests a DO PASS recommendation for House Bill 1419.