

**TESTIMONY OF BRUCE R. CARLSON
MANAGER OF VERENDRYE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE
TO THE US SENATE BUDGET COMMITTEE
FIELD HEARING – TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE
March 27, 2008**

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, my name is Bruce Carlson, General Manager of Verendrye Electric Cooperative, headquartered in Velva. Verendrye serves 10,400 meters in six counties over 4,400 miles of power line. In order to keep the lights on for our membership, VEC rolls 41 mobile units down the road with a total of over a half million miles driven per year. Our facilities west of Velva on Highway 52 serves as a hub and nerve center for the cooperative. I strongly support the Senate Budget Committee's efforts to address crucial infrastructure investments in North Dakota.

Semi-truck traffic is a special concern, especially with our own large units, which often include pole trailers. VEC handles approximately 240 incoming and outgoing truckloads of construction materials per year. Verendrye changes out over 600 poles per year due to construction and our aggressive maintenance programs. Most poles are 40-feet in length with some 50-feet in length. On all loads, at least 10 feet of pole is extending beyond the pole trailer's axle and safety is a concern. These pole trailer traffic numbers do not include our other units: two bucket trucks, two underground trucks pulling trenchers and our backhoe, our semi-truck moving the payload and cable, VEC's smaller service trucks and all employee personal vehicles.

It's ironic with our large 134-township service area that over the past ten years VEC has been involved in two serious accidents. Both of these accidents occurred between Velva and Logan. It's also ironic that a semi-truck carrying anhydrous ammonia was involved in one of the accidents. It's a miracle that our Member Services Representative wasn't killed with our service truck being totaled.

Probably the best common sense example of the need for maintaining on-off ramps, over passes and the need for four-lane highways, comes from our board member who lives in Berthold. On the way to Velva for a recent board meeting, Ralph Birdsall counted 123 west-bound vehicles in the 20 miles stretch between Minot and our headquarters on the west side of Velva.

On behalf of Verendrye Electric Cooperative, I strongly encourage the U.S. Senate Budget Committee to include the dollars needed to maintain and enhance North Dakota's highway infrastructure.