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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

January 24, 2018

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Secretary Elaine Chao
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Chao:

I write today to express my concerns about the current state of the Robert O. Norris Bridge, which carries Virginia Route 3 over the Rappahannock River from Lancaster to Middlesex counties in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Built in 1957, the Norris Bridge is now in its seventh decade of operation. At its completion, the bridge serviced an average of 1,000 vehicles per day. Due to development in the region and increased population growth, recent surveys show the bridge now services 8,208 vehicles per average weekday. The Norris Bridge serves as the main thoroughfare for visitors and residents traveling to and from the Northern Neck and Middle Peninsula. Additionally, the bridge serves as the nexus for much of the economic success in the region as many businesses rely on its operation to carry their goods throughout the Northern Neck and Middle Peninsula communities. As I talk with business leaders in my District, I hear how traffic delays associated with repairs to the bridge have affected business, with some losing up to \$10,000 to \$15,000 a week from lane closures and detours.

The Robert O. Norris Bridge is a steel truss structure, which is the oldest type of modern bridge operating in America today. The I-35 West Mississippi River Bridge that failed on August 1, 2007, in Minneapolis, Minnesota was a similar type of steel truss bridge built during the same period as the Norris Bridge. In addition, the Governor Harry W. Nice Memorial (Potomac River) Bridge, another bridge of comparable design and age, is slated for replacement along with a Virginia crossing improvement project coordinated with the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT).

To be eligible for state of good repair funds, a bridge must earn a rating of 4 or less on a scale of 0-9 in the following categories; Deck, Superstructure, Substructure. I understand that in its most recent full inspection, the Norris Bridge received a condition rating of 5 in all three categories, deeming it in "fair condition" and therefore not eligible for state of good repair funds.

In September of 2017, VDOT released a concept study on the Norris Bridge, which developed and evaluated superstructure concept alternatives to replace the bridge's superstructure or replace the bridge entirely. This study identified that a complete bridge replacement on a new upstream alignment as the least impactful and least costly alternative for the life of the bridge.

As you work with Congress to help address our nation's infrastructure needs, I respectfully ask that you consider prioritizing projects, such as the replacement of the Norris Bridge. Constituents and businesses in my district rely on the Norris Bridge and rely on mobility for a higher standard of living and a better quality of life. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Robert J. Wittman
Member of Congress

Cc: Rep. Bill Shuster, Chairman, Transportation and Infrastructure Committee