

# United States Senate

September 3, 2024

Honorable Pete Buttigieg  
Secretary of Transportation  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

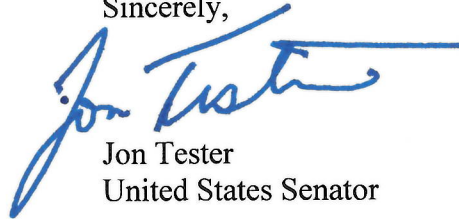
I write today regarding an urgent situation in Noxon, Montana. Citing public safety concerns and recommendations from bridge inspectors, the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) issued a bridge closure order to Sanders County for the Noxon Bridge on July 12, 2024. Officials completed temporary repairs on the bridge in July, however, traffic flow is heavily restricted and an engineering firm hired to evaluate the bridge has recommended full bridge replacement as soon as possible. This historic bridge is critically important to the economic success and safety of the Noxon community. In the coming weeks, I ask that you prioritize working with MDT and the local community to develop a plan to swiftly deploy funds from my bipartisan infrastructure legislation to replace the Noxon Bridge and fully restore access to Noxon's downtown area.

The historic Noxon Bridge provides the main access to the town of Noxon from Highway 200 and serves a critical role for the town's infrastructure, logging operations, school bus transportation, postal service and general operations. Though the Noxon Bridge has reopened to allow essential food and supply deliveries to be transported into town and for school buses to continue their usual routes, transit over the bridge has been restricted to a maximum speed of 10 miles per hour and maximum weight of 29 tons. Alternative routes into Noxon are a partially maintained road from Noxon to Trout Creek and a roadway to Heron, which is mostly gravel. I am worried about the immediate effects that the restrictions on this important roadway will have on the ability for Noxon residents and folks who conduct business in the area to travel to and from Noxon's main street. Furthermore, I am concerned about the ability of emergency services vehicles to travel in and out of downtown should an emergency occur in the area.

Bridge replacement projects can require significant investments. That's why I worked with my colleagues to write and pass the bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, which includes significant funding for the Federal Highway Administration's Bridge Formula Program. This year, Montana will receive \$45 million through this program, \$6.75 of which must be used for off-system bridges like the Noxon Bridge.

I appreciate your agency's continued efforts to improve our nation's bridges, and I ask that you work to support Montana's efforts to replace the historic Noxon Bridge. I stand ready to work with you on this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jon Tester", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jon Tester  
United States Senator