



Statement of the American Farm Bureau Federation

**TO THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND
INFRASTRUCTURE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HIGHWAYS AND TRANSIT**

“America Builds: How Trucking Supports American Communities”

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**Presented By:
American Farm Bureau Federation
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Presented By: Dan Glessing, President, Minnesota Farm Bureau Federation

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, I am Dan Glessing, a fifth-generation dairy farmer from Waverly, Minnesota. My wife, Seena, and I, along with our four children, milk 70 Holsteins and grow corn, soybeans, alfalfa, and oats on our family farm.

I am President of the Minnesota Farm Bureau Federation and I am pleased to offer this testimony on behalf of the Minnesota Farm Bureau Federation and the American Farm Bureau Federation, which is the largest general agriculture organization in the country.

The success of American agriculture relies upon a robust, safe, and dependable transportation system. Farmers and ranchers do not have the option to work remotely — our livelihoods are tied to the land.

However, the products we grow and raise must travel far beyond our farm gates to reach markets, processors, and consumers. That journey begins on rural roads and bridges, which serve as the critical first link in our transportation supply chain. That is why Congress needs to consider the benefits of the SHIP-IT Act, introduced last Congress by Reps. Dusty Johnson and Jim Costa. The SHIP-IT Act is a positive first step in addressing our supply chain shortfalls as it would streamline the process for hiring truck drivers, of which there are not enough of, make it safer for trucks by expanding safe parking opportunities, takes a serious look at increasing truck weights for vehicles with six axles, and allows for easier transportation of agricultural commodities within a 150 air-mile radius.

A great example of the impact of transportation policy on farmers all the way through the supply chain to consumers has been Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza, which has significantly impacted Minnesota poultry populations and diminished the national supply of eggs. Getting eggs into your frying pan is a complex series of supply chain moves, but they all start on a farm in rural America. The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) issued an emergency declaration exempting hours of service regulations for commercial motor vehicle operations engaged in the emergency transport of live chickens.

While this declaration is helpful – it makes an even greater point to the agriculture supply chain. The decisions made in this committee and the regulatory burden faced by agriculture have a direct impact on the price of food for consumers and the livelihoods of farmers from Minnesota and across America.

My testimony today will outline several key issues affecting our nation’s agriculture industry and transportation infrastructure.

I. Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA)

The American Farm Bureau Federation continues to support the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) for its essential investments in our nation’s infrastructure. These investments will help keep U.S. agriculture competitive in the global market, which is all the more essential when, for the first time in many of our lifetimes, the U.S. has become a net importer of food. Ensuring that our farmers and ranchers have access to reliable transportation infrastructure is more critical now than ever.

While highways are vital for transporting agricultural goods, we must also recognize the importance of rail and inland waterways. In many cases, waterway transportation is more cost-effective than traditional road transport. Investing in rural bridges and local roads ensures that farmers can efficiently reach barge and rail facilities, reducing transportation costs and improving global market access.

II. National Highway Trust Fund

The National Highway Trust Fund is the backbone of our transportation infrastructure, providing crucial funding for the maintenance and improvement of roads and bridges in rural communities. However, the fund faces long-term sustainability challenges. Farm Bureau supports increasing Highway Trust Fund fees to reflect advancements in fuel efficiency and rising inflation. We also advocate for ensuring that all road users, regardless of energy source, contribute fairly to the fund's revenue.

Investments in roads and bridges must not only address urban congestion but also the unique needs of rural America. Over 46% of America's rural roads are rated as "poor" or "mediocre," and over 10% of rural bridges are structurally deficient.¹ When a bridge closure forces a farmer to take a 50-mile detour just to transport their grain to a local elevator, it's not just an inconvenience, it's a direct hit to their bottom line. I urge this committee to work with Farm Bureau to prioritize long-term, sustainable funding solutions for the National Highway Trust Fund.

III. Electronic Logging Devices and Hours-of-Service Exemptions

Transportation regulations must also take into account the unique needs of agriculture. Farmers and ranchers aren't hauling inanimate goods that can sit in a truck for hours. We are transporting live animals, and every additional stop or delay poses risks to their health and safety.

The IIJA recognized this by providing an exemption for livestock and insect haulers from Hours-of-Service regulations within a 150 air-mile radius of their final destination. We appreciate this committee's work in securing that exemption, and we ask for continued support to ensure that regulations reflect the realities of agricultural transportation.

IV. Conclusion

In closing, I urge this committee to prioritize the needs of rural America as you consider transportation infrastructure investments and regulatory policies. By maintaining strong rural road and bridge funding, ensuring fair contributions to the Highway Trust Fund, and upholding necessary exemptions for agricultural haulers, we can ensure a sustainable future for American agriculture.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I look forward to your questions.

1. TRIP. *Rural Connections: Examining the Condition, Use and Funding Needs of America's Rural Roads & Bridges*. September 2024. https://tripnet.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/TRIP_Rural_Connections_Report_September_2024.pdf.