

To Whom It May Concern:

I would like to express strong support for the preservation of historic bridges, particularly metal truss bridges, especially as the reauthorization of surface transportation is considered by Congress. Rapidly disappearing from the landscape, historic bridges are important to America because they are living history: a physical artifact of the achievements and lifestyle from a past period. They are often the only surviving record of the engineers who designed them, the craftsmen who fabricated them, and the workers who erected them. They show an important part of how America's infrastructure has evolved and changed. In addition, many historic bridges offer a complex design and attention to appearance which results in a beauty that is not seen in modern bridges. I urge you to expand the protections and funding available to help preserve historic bridges. Funding sources are currently very limited and often historic bridges that might be rehabilitated for a reasonable cost and continued functional use end up being demolished because funds for preserving them are not available.

Some legislation is currently in place that recognizes historic bridges, and provides limited funding for preservation projects. These policies have enabled a number of projects to take place that have resulted in a number of preservation success stories across the country. However, many historic bridges remain on lists of deteriorated bridge and are in danger of demolition and replacement. In addition, current preservation legislation tends to favor wooden covered bridges, while ignoring other historically significant and beautiful bridge types such as metal truss bridges. All forms of historic bridges are worthy of preservation consideration. Many historic bridges, particularly metal truss bridges, have been demolished in the years past. Please consider designing a program that will aid the preservation of all types of historic bridges.

In working to improving our nation's deteriorated bridges, it is important that historic bridges are not being demolished when preservation is feasible. I strongly support a plan that protects historic bridges and funds their restoration. Historic bridges can often be restored and continue to be safe and functional vehicular bridges, often for a cost equal or less than replacing them. Alternatively, historic bridges can be relocated and restored elsewhere where they can function as a non-motorized crossing on the many forms of non-motorized facilities that are important in a country that is increasingly aware of the health and environmental benefits of non-motorized transportation.

The preservation of historic bridges can also be a way to help improve the economy. I understand that President Obama is working to create jobs for Americans to try to reduce unemployment in the country. The preservation and restoration of historic bridges has the potential to create numerous new jobs for Americans. By creating programs that provide protection and funding for historic bridges, an industry can be built upon historic bridge preservation, while also benefiting the construction sector in general. The restoration of historic bridges draws from job fields including engineering, construction, landscaping, metalworking, and many other fields.

In addition, a restored historic bridge can continue to benefit a local economy. Historic bridges can serve as landmarks for towns which improve the beauty and heritage of the communities in which they reside, and also serve as attractions for visitors, bringing in valuable tourism dollars to communities. Regions that have multiple restored bridges can design "historic bridge tours" that visitors can follow to see the various historic bridges in the area. These tours can be placed on brochures at visitor centers serving to increase tourism to a region.

I strongly support the preservation of historic bridges, particularly metal truss bridges. I hope that the Obama team will work to protect, fund, and preserve this nation's beautiful and valuable historic bridges.