

February 28, 2008

The Honorable Lyndo Tippet
Secretary, North Carolina Department of Transportation
1501 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699

Dear Secretary Tippet:

As a Senator for North Carolina and a resident of Rowan County, I am concerned about the Interstate 85 (I-85) bridges over the Yadkin River in Rowan County. Replacing the bridges is of utmost importance, particularly to the individuals in the 60,000 vehicles that cross the bridges daily.

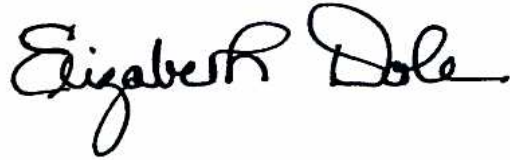
There are a number of issues to be fully examined and considered in the replacement of the bridges, with safety being the primary concern. As you are aware, I-85 on both sides of the bridges either has been or is in the process of being widened to accommodate additional vehicles. Forcing traffic to squeeze back into two lanes to cross the bridges in each direction is hazardous and has resulted in numerous accidents. In addition, structurally, the 52 year old bridges are at the end of their lifespan and have a rating of only 53.2 out of 100.

As a former U.S. secretary of transportation, I am fully aware of the important role the federal government has in distributing transportation dollars to the states. As a Senator, I have worked to ensure that North Carolina receives a greater share of highway funds. In addition, I am an original cosponsor of the Build America Bonds Act, which would offer bonds for purchase in different denominations and enable all Americans to have an opportunity to support upgrading America's transportation infrastructure. Funds from the bonds would be controlled by the states and supplement the funding they receive from the existing federal transportation program.

In the Senate, I have made every effort to secure federal funding for specific transportation projects in North Carolina when feasible and appropriate. My understanding, however, is that this option is not in order for the new Yadkin River bridges because of the way that the state's current equity formula distributes transportation funds, including those received from the federal government. In fact, I have been asked *not* to request directed federal funds for this project by individuals within NCDOT because if provided, this funding could eliminate transportation funds for other much-needed projects in the area.

It is my hope that your office will work with local officials to determine the most effective and efficient way to construct new I-85 Yadkin River bridges, and I continue to stand ready to work to support this project at the federal level. Please contact me or have your staff contact my staff if I can be of any assistance.

With my warmest best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Elizabeth Dole". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent loop at the end of the word "Dole".