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## United States Department of the Interior

National Park Service  
Theodore Roosevelt National Park  
Post Office Box 7  
Medora, North Dakota 58645



June 27, 2012

Chad M. Orn  
North Dakota Department of Transportation  
608 East Boulevard Avenue  
Bismarck, North Dakota 58505-0700

Dear Mr. Orn:

I note that you are taking comments on a proposed amendment to the State Transportation Improvement Plan (STIP) for Preliminary Engineering to consider upgrading US Highway 85 between I-94 and South of Watford City to a four lane highway.

It is not clear what "South of Watford City" means in this context. However, if you are considering a four lane road that would traverse the North Unit of Theodore Roosevelt National Park, then we have many concerns.

Highway 85 is the main route between the South Unit and North Unit of Theodore Roosevelt National Park (TRNP). Therefore, we share concerns regarding safety along the route between Belfield and Watford City. We agree that safety concerns need to be addressed with wider lanes, turning lanes, better approaches and other improvements. However, we do not support a 4-lane highway between Belfield and Watford City due to its direct and indirect impacts on the national park. The funds for the engineering study would be better spent making needed improvements to the existing road.

Highway 85 traverses over two miles *within* the legislated boundary of Theodore Roosevelt National Park, both on national park lands and private lands within the North Unit boundary. The appeal of the North Unit is that it is remote, unspoiled, quiet, and undeveloped. Ideally, any major corridor would be routed around the North Unit or follow some other route. A four lane highway would never be appropriate in that area. We cannot imagine what an attempt to create a 4-lane road through the rugged badlands would do to the scenery, the wildlife habitat, and the serenity of the North Unit.

We ask that you delay any amendment to the STIP until the interested public has had an opportunity to be better informed about this issue. In addition, I would like to set up a personal meeting with you and others who are interested in this project to discuss North Unit issues at your earliest convenience.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

Valerie J. Naylor  
Superintendent