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108th Congress
Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

January 24, 2005

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Director Gloria Jeff
Michigan Department of Transportation
State Transportation Building
425 West Ottawa Street
Lansing, Michigan 48933-1532

Dear Director Jeff:

I am writing to express my strong concern with the Michigan Department of Transportation's proposed Five Year Road and Bridge Program for the state of Michigan, and in particular its impact on West Michigan.

As I am sure you are aware, the counties of Kent, Ottawa and Muskegon have increased in population by nearly 20 percent since 1990. Comparing the Grand Rapids-Holland-Muskegon population center to similar metropolitan areas in the Upper Midwest, such as Cleveland, Detroit, Chicago and Indianapolis, it has the fastest rate of population growth, the fastest rate of employment growth and the fastest-growing manufacturing sector. These economic and population trends are significantly increasing the demands on the transportation system in West Michigan and compounding congestion in certain corridors.

Your determination to implement the Preserve First program in West Michigan, as opposed to balancing it with the need for capacity improvements, will have a profoundly negative impact on the congestion and safety of West Michigan's transportation system and the future economic success of the region. The Draft Five Year Transportation Plan does not reflect the widely recognized need to immediately address congestion on the U.S. 31 corridor between Grand Haven and Holland, construct long-overdue safety improvements to the I-196/Chicago Drive interchange or decrease traffic backups at several critical points in the Muskegon area. Unless the transportation plan is modified to significantly improve these situations, I cannot support it.

As you know, we share the same vision for increasing the rate of return on federal highway and transit funds for the state of Michigan. I remain committed to this cause and will do my best to ensure that Michigan receives its fair share of federal transportation funds as Congress prepares legislation to reauthorize our nation's transportation programs. While we move forward together in this pursuit, I believe it is only fair that the transportation plan for the state of Michigan reflect the increasing traffic volumes in West Michigan and the need to improve safety and decrease congestion in the area.

Thank you for your immediate attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Pete Hoekstra
Member of Congress



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