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MICHIGAN CHAPTER AMERICAN SOCIETY OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS

Dear Transportation Committee Members:

Good morning and thank you for the opportunity to speak to these important pieces of legislation. My name is Norm Cox. I am a licensed landscape architect and come to you on behalf of the Michigan Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects. The Society's mission is to lead, to educate, and to participate in the careful stewardship, wise planning, and artful design of our cultural and natural environments.

As the Chair of our Government Affairs Committee I wish to voice our support for HB 6151 and HB 6152. These bills will support the landscape architects of Michigan in their endeavors to create healthy, livable communities that provide active transportation options for all their residents. We see this as an important step in making Michigan a more attractive place to live, work and play.

I also come with the perspective of the founder of the Greenway Collaborative, a consulting firm which has specialized in non-motorized transportation planning and complete street design since 1993. We have worked on non-motorized transportation plans for Ann Arbor, East Lansing, Lansing, Troy, Kalamazoo, Novi, St. Clair County, Jackson Public Schools, Michigan State University, University of Michigan and Grand Valley State University. We have also worked with MDOT preparing context sensitive non-motorized guidelines for St. Clair County.

Perhaps there is a perception that "complete streets" is some new fangled, far out idea for which this legislation is too far ahead of the curve. I am here to say that nothing is farther from the truth. The concept of complete streets is fully integrated in our nation's transportation policies, guidelines and standards.

While much has been made of the recent policy statement by the U.S. Secretary of Transportation, eleven years ago, in 1999, USDOT issued another policy statement on integrating bicycling and walking into transportation infrastructure. It was the departments interpretation of the language in the ISTEA, the first of the next generation of transportation bills. It basically said to establish bicycle and pedestrian accommodations in all new and reconstruction projects as a matter of course. That we plan facilities with future land use in mind and address cross-corridor travel. Most importantly, if facilities were not to be provided, the lack of need must be demonstrated and exceptions must be approved at a senior level.

The American Association of State Highway Transportation Official's (AASHTO) *A Policy on Geometric Design of Highways and Streets*, the "Green Book" states "Emphasis has been placed on the joint use of transportation corridors by pedestrians, cyclists and public transit vehicles." The Green Book also incorporates by reference AASHTO's *Guide for the Planning, Design, and Operation of Pedestrian Facilities* and the *Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities*. And there is nothing in the AASHTO Bike and Pedestrian guides that conflicts with MDOT's Design Manual.

Yet, in every city you can find a five lane roadway through a commercial strip without a sidewalk or any way to cross the road for a half mile or more. Brand new interchanges are built in rapidly growing areas without any pedestrian or bicycle facilities. Fortunately, such disregard for bicyclists and pedestrians is not universal. We have partnered with many community's transportation planners and engineers to try to make amends for the lopsided transportation investments of the past 60 years. In our work we also see tremendous opportunity to rebrand this state, improving its image nationwide. The same infrastructure that was designed to handle multiple plants emptying out at 5:00 has left many of our city's with excess road capacity. We often find we can make substantial improvement with minimal funds. Sometimes it is only a matter of paint.

But, despite this progress, too frequently we still see bicycle and pedestrian improvements either completely ignored, delegated to the lowest of priorities or omitted due to unfounded fears of liability. It is because despite all of the policy statements and institutional backing, a significant number of transportation officials still do not see bicycle and pedestrian transportation as their responsibility. For them it is "not my job." Well we need to make it their job.

Transportation design standards are not static. They are constantly evolving based on new research. It is part of the transportation profession. What we are talking about here is simply "a new standard." The resistance is coming because we are not talking about changes to superelevation in an interchange ramp or ways of stopping vehicles crossing over freeway medians but about fully integrating additional modes of travel. This is not about taking money away – but about redistributing money based on changing priorities. This is something that is done every day in the transportation world. These bills do not eliminate jobs – it redirects them. If anything we are creating jobs in the creative class of professions that we so desperately want to keep in our state.

Yes, this makes people's jobs more complex, but we are now painfully aware of the consequences of a myopic view of transportation. We also need to make sure that there is a consistent approach across the state. These things will only happen with laws that have teeth. These laws in front of you will go a long way towards changing the metrics that we use to evaluate the success of our transportation system.

Thank you,



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Chair, Government Affairs Committee

Michigan Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects