



Citizens for a Safer Community

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June 10, 2010

The Honorable Pam Byrnes
Chair, House Committee on Transportation
State Capitol, Room 521
PO Box 30014
Lansing, MI 48909

RE: House Bill 6151 and 6152 - Proposed Complete Streets Legislation

Dear Chairperson Byrnes and Members of the Committee:

I would like to first thank the Committee for allowing me to testify this morning. My name is Petra Robbert. I am here today representing my organization, Citizens for a Safer Community, its Board of Directors, and the hundreds of residents living in the City of Allegan and surrounding townships. We would like to voice our support for the Complete Streets legislation brought before this Committee today.

The City of Allegan, with its centralized location, has long served as the hub for trade and commerce within Allegan County. The roads that lead to Allegan were once a source of local pride, with Allegan's slogan, "All Roads Lead to Allegan," proudly proclaimed on the City's logo. While once viewed as a distinguishing feature of our city, and vital to the local economy, the roads now represent a unique and difficult obstacle for our community.

Today the City of Allegan sits at the center of 5 highways, 4 which are state trunk lines that all converge at one point within two blocks of the downtown district. Visualize for a moment, a bicycle wheel with 5 spokes - all converging at one point - then picture how each of those spokes is a highway that separates the residential neighborhoods, isolating them from the downtown business district and the rest of the community.

Over the past 15 years Allegan has been one of the fastest growing Counties in the state and has seen a tremendous increase in traffic. Unfortunately, this growth has had a very negative impact on the safety, health and overall quality of life within our community. For years, the Department of Transportation has collected documentation showing Allegan to have amongst the highest traffic volumes and accident rates in the County.

Among these 5 highways, there are only two designated crosswalks, creating a dangerous situation for pedestrians and cyclists. In just the past few years, several residents have been hit trying to cross the street at those intersections - three were seriously injured. One pedestrian recently lost a leg, and another child was tragically killed by a semi-truck, after the child lost control of his bicycle going down a hill where there were no pedestrian buffers.

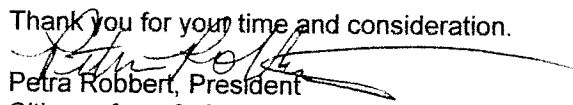
Parents no longer allow their children to walk or ride their bicycles to school. Senior citizens no longer walk to the grocery store or to other shops. Even the most able-bodied adults have difficulty walking safely across our streets. What was once a walk-able community has become incredibly unsafe for pedestrians and cyclists.

Adopting the Complete Streets Bills would provide us with new tools to develop plans to address these long-term systemic deficiencies in our state road network. It would offer us the ability to apply for federal funding that we would otherwise not be qualified for. It would also provide state transportation planners with the flexibility to assist us in addressing these issues so that we can reconnect our neighborhoods, provide safe pedestrian crossings, improve the traffic corridors, revitalize the downtown business district and make our community more accessible for everyone.

Passing Complete Streets legislation would help us to attract and retain new investment. Taking an enlightened approach to redesigning our infrastructure by recognizing the realities and challenges of the 21st century would help restore our once walk-able community – a vital component to sustaining the local economy. It would also allow all of our citizens to age in-place, live healthier, more active lives, allowing them to live out their lives in dignity.

For more than 15 years, residents of Allegan have struggled to reconnect our neighborhoods and preserve our cultural heritage, history and quality of life. If Allegan is going to return to prosperity and be part of the economic recovery, we need your help and support. By passing these Bills, with your help and your support, we can make Allegan a healthier and more vibrant place for all.

Thank you for your time and consideration.


Petra Robbert, President
Citizens for a Safer Community
Allegan, Michigan