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The City of Traverse City

Office of the Mayor

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The Honorable Pam Byrnes  
Chair, House Committee on Transportation  
State Capitol, Room 251  
PO Box 30014  
Lansing, MI 48909

Via email

Re: HB 6151 and 6152

Dear Chairperson Byrnes and Members of the Committee:

I am writing as the Mayor of Traverse City, to support HB 6151 and 6152. Due to our meeting schedule, I am unable to put this letter before the entire City Commission before your hearing. Therefore, I can only offer it as my opinion, but I wanted to offer it all the same.

Traverse City is experiencing a trend in which people are moving into the city because they want to live in town and experience the amenities that living in an older city offers. I expect this is true in some other older Michigan cities as well. Our two growing demographics in the city are the young professionals that many cities and the State of Michigan in general seek to attract, and empty-nest baby boomers who wish to simplify their lifestyles. Near the top of the list of amenities these groups - and many other residents - desire of in-town living are transportation choices. Put more simply, they want to have options for how to get to work, to the store, to school, or to the park.

Traverse City therefore has adopted a Master Plan that endorses transportation choices as one of its seven core values - the principles around which future city planning is to be organized. In the past three years, the City Commission has also increased tenfold our spending to reconstruct old infrastructure, and in doing so has adopted an Infrastructure Policy favoring complete streets as we rebuild the city's template block-by-block over the next 20 years.

Traverse City - like a number of other Michigan cities - is also the core of a larger region, and in partnership with the Michigan Department of Transportation our region has been participating in a federally funded transportation study called the Grand Vision. A scientific poll taken in connection with the Grand Vision showed that 91% of the respondents wanted more walkable, bikeable neighborhoods.

Because Traverse City is at the core of our region, several trunkline roads and highways run through our city and connect us to other cities and towns in Northwest

Lower Michigan. They border our neighborhoods and parks, and many of our commercial districts lie along them. Part of the Grand Vision's strategy for dealing with future transportation needs is to reduce by a reasonable measure the amount of additional automobile infrastructure that is necessary by making other alternatives - principally walking, bicycling, and public transit - safer and more convenient. I believe these measures will also increase the liveability of our city, and thereby our property values, and thereby our tax base.

Finally, Traverse City - like a number of other Michigan cities - is hugely dependent on tourism. Visitors here want to drive into town and get out of their cars - to walk along the shopping districts, visit the parks, ride their bicycles, and enjoy the beaches. They want to use complete streets when they come here too.

Because complete streets help us attract people to live here and to visit here, they are a vital part of our economic development strategy and our planning for the future. I suspect the same is true of other Michigan cities. I believe we would all benefit from this legislation, and I urge you to support it. I thank you for your service to all Michigan residents, and for your consideration of these comments.

Sincerely,



Christopher M. Bzdok  
Mayor

cc: City Commission  
Planning Commission  
Parks and Recreation Commission