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109th Congress

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

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HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

May 2, 2005

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 concern about a recent report indicating that the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) is considering constructing a \$500,000 fence to divert turtles attempting to cross U.S. 31. With so many other transportation and economic projects in the Muskegon area deserving of consideration, I question the priority this project is receiving at this time. Therefore, I would like to request an opportunity to be briefed by MDOT officials so that I may better understand its scope, justification and magnitude.

Over the last several years I have worked closely with Muskegon County officials, city of Muskegon planners and local leaders to understand and address the transportation needs of Muskegon County. As recently as January 14, 2005 I hosted a meeting in Muskegon with local leaders and transportation officials to discuss the state of Michigan's proposed Five Year Road and Bridge Program and the transportation needs of Muskegon County not identified in the draft document. It was a productive meeting, and I left with an extensive list of recommendations and a clear understanding of the short- and long-term transportation issues confronting Muskegon. Regrettably, I must inform you that a turtle fence barrier along U.S. 31 was not a priority discussed at this meeting.

Specifically, requests were made to address congestion at the M-46/U.S. 31 interchange and the north-central corridor of U.S. 31 near Russell Road, to support additional infrastructure development in downtown Muskegon, to upgrade the I-96/U.S. 31 interchange to meet federal design standards and to pursue efforts to understand the role that the concentrated road network in Muskegon Heights plays in the distribution of contaminated sediments downstream in Little Black Creek.

I understand and appreciate MDOT's efforts to protect wildlife and reduce vehicle collisions with West Michigan's animal population on U.S. 31 near the Muskegon River. However, in the future, as you work to determine priorities in the Muskegon area, I am hopeful that you will give consideration to the projects that will improve infrastructure and economic growth in Muskegon County.

Sincerely,



Pete Hoekstra
Member of Congress



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