

December 21<sup>st</sup>, 2011

Ray LaHood  
Secretary of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE  
Washington, DC 20590

The Honorable Rick Snyder  
Governor of Michigan  
P.O. Box 30013  
Lansing, MI 48909

The Honorable Dave Bing  
Mayor, City of Detroit  
C. A. Young Municipal Center  
Detroit, MI 48226

Dear Sirs:

On behalf of Transportation Riders United (TRU), I would like to share our concerns on the recent decision to stop development of Light Rail on Woodward Avenue. TRU is a non-profit organization dedicated to improving public transit throughout greater Detroit, including improving bus service and breaking down barriers to true rapid transit.

We share your belief that Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) can provide important transportation service when built on the right corridors. However we disagree that Woodward Light Rail must be ended in order to develop BRT – that is a false choice. Instead we urge you to reinstate the Light Rail project immediately and to support the development of a Regional Transit Authority and new options for funding transit to improve regional transit and our economy.

Despite the financial challenges facing our City of Detroit, our region and our state, Woodward Light Rail (as approved in the FTA Record of Decision) has enormous potential to increase the economic viability of the Woodward corridor and generate significant tax revenue through increased property value and new businesses. Current financial crises make this economic boost even more important.

The City has already analyzed which transit mode is best for Woodward. After two years of careful analysis and stakeholder input, Light Rail was selected in 2008 as the best transit mode for Woodward because of its large capacity, low cost of operations, and strong public support. Over five years and \$13 million have been spent analyzing and planning Woodward Light Rail. It would be fiscally irresponsible to throw away those well-reasoned decisions and that investment of time and money, especially as Bus Rapid Transit would require much of this effort be redone, adding 3-5 years more delay.

The full 9-mile light rail line would clearly provide the greatest benefits for riders, developers, and the economy. However, we are also open to further exploration of the feasibility of building an initial 3.4 mile light rail line, consistent with the RoD. The M1 Rail investors believe the first phase could be completed for around \$225 million, which could be paid for with the \$25 million

TIGER grant, \$100 million from the private consortium, and \$135 million in federal New Starts funding. That could also cover some of the operating costs, along with tax-increment financing.

In addition, we applaud recent efforts, led by Governor Snyder, to develop a Regional Transit Authority. We urge all parties involved to put aside narrow self-interest and recognize the broader benefit for the entire region from effective regional transit. The new RTA board must vote in a democratic method, not allowing any single board member or community to have veto-power over essential regional decisions.

The people of southeast Michigan must be given the opportunity to vote to fund more and better transit. The Michigan legislature must provide new tools for funding transit (beyond property taxes) and eliminate any barriers to voting. Please give people the right to choose!

We also agree that better transit is needed well beyond Woodward. A strong Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system will certainly complement this first Light Rail project. We urge you to be specific when referencing BRT and not confuse it with express bus service. True Bus Rapid Transit must have pre-boarding fare payment at permanent stations at the same level as the vehicles, plus dedicated lanes, priority at traffic signals, and 5-15 minute frequency. Without these, it is not BRT. True BRT is substantially more expensive than recent media have estimated, especially for operating costs. Please share with us and with the public the proposed plans and cost estimates for regional rapid transit, so they can be fully and carefully evaluated based on local needs.

Restoring Light Rail on Woodward is the most significant transit and development opportunity in generations. New Transit Oriented Development with the appropriate mix of retail, businesses, office space, and residences will anchor Greater Detroit for generations to come with this M1 Light Rail Project. The region cannot afford to discard this opportunity to spur redevelopment and support vibrant, walkable neighborhoods where investment from the private sector will complement the public investment for this first phase. We need only ask ourselves if we are building for the future, or for the moment.

Sincerely and Respectfully,

Megan Owens, Executive Director

cc: President Barack Obama  
Honorable John Conyers Jr., Hansen Clarke, Gary Peters, U.S. House of Representatives  
Honorable Carl Levin and Debbie Stabenow, U.S. Senate  
Roger Penske, Dan Gilbert, and Matt Cullen, M-1 Rail  
Rip Rapson, President and CEO, Kresge Corporation