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February 18, 2009 February 25, 2009

Ms. Rebecca A. Humpheries, Director
Michigan Department of Natural Resources
P.O. Box 30028
Lansing, MI 48909

Dear Ms. Humpheries:

I am writing concerning the proposed construction of the "Ring Road" in Lyon Township and its threatened impact upon the Huron Valley Trail. The two features with which I am concerned are the two proposed intersections of the Ring Road with the Huron Valley Trail, and the proposed relocation of a segment of the Huron Valley Trail.

The Huron Valley Trail (or "HVT") is a DNR-owned trailway corridor in southwestern Oakland County. The Huron Valley Trail runs from Wixom to South Lyon, on the former railroad right-of-way formerly known as the Airline Railroad and stretching from near Lake St. Clair to Jackson. There are no longer any active railway operations in the corridor, and most portions of it have been acquired, or are currently being acquired by the DNR, local communities and trailway management groups. In addition to the Huron Valley Trail, other fully developed trail segments in the corridor include the Falling Waters Trail, Jackson City Trail, Lakeland Trails State Park, the West Bloomfield Trail, the Clinton River Trail and the Macomb Orchard Trail. The HVT also connects to both Island Lake State Recreational Area and Kensington Metropark, which, either together or apart, constitute the largest parkland in southern Oakland County and draw visitors from three counties and beyond.

The recent closure of the Star Clipper Dinner Train in Walled Lake makes available more than ten additional miles of Airline Railroad corridor in mid-Oakland County. The HVT is already a regional attraction for bicyclists and other persons who enjoy outdoor activities, and the potential for connected trails running from Jackson nearly to Lake St. Clair is a prospect, which many dedicated bicyclists, planners and other citizens look forward to.

In addition to being a segment of a larger trail system, the HVT is an important resource for the communities of Milford, Wixom, Lyon Township, New Hudson and South Lyon. The Lyon Township website touts the non-motorized trail connections between the township and both Kensington Metropark and Island Lake State Recreation Area. The City of Wixom's website advertises the fact that most of its parks are connected to the Wixom Trail System. The City of South Lyon publishes a trail map on its website showing the connections made by the HVT and its park connector paths to schools, downtown, and its several parks and recreational facilities. The HVT is the main thoroughfare of the local trail systems.

The Huron Valley Trail in Milford Township and Lyon Township was improved and paved in 2002 on the DNR-owned segment of the Airline Railroad. The improvement project was funded by a Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund grant, Federal Transportation Enhancement Grant administered by MDOT, local communities and bicycle grants. Yet this marvelous new trail has required protection from the forces of commercial development and urban sprawl. In 2004, when the proposed Ring Road was planned, I wrote to Mr. Lowen Schuett to express concern with the potential interruption of the trail with the proposed level crossings by the Ring Road. A copy of this letter is enclosed. Concern was heightened further in 2006 with the request from Giffels & Websters Engrs. to Mr. Paul Yauk of the DNR to relocate the HVT along the proposed Ring Road (a multi-lane commercial roadway). A copy of this

letter is also enclosed. The route of the Ring Road and its intersection of the HVT are illustrated on the attached map/drawing entitled, "LyonRingRoad.PDF". The proposed relocation, which is not apparent from the map, would be the segment of the trail between the two places where the Ring Road would cross the HVT. The proposal is apparently to route the HVT along the east side of the Ring Road.

These threats to the trail continue. In early 2007, after receipt of the Dec. 7, 2006 letter making the Lyon Township request for "at grade" crossing of the HVT and Ring Road alternative, DNR Parks and Recreation Division personnel stated that the HVT crossing "at grade" level would not be permitted. However, in late 2008 the same personnel acknowledged a reversal of that position, and the proposed Ring Road would be permitted to not only cross the HVT "at grade" level, but would also result in the HVT being relocated to become a side-path, or sidewalk along the proposed Ring Road for a distance of over one mile. According to the proposed engineering plans for the Ring Road, an important segment of the HVT in Lyon Township would be relocated along a proposed multi-lane commercial roadway, and the current DNR owned property be traded away. I oppose those plans, and implore the DNR to put down these threats to the HVT.

The relocation of a segment of the HVT to a side path of the Ring Road would be a serious compromise to the safety, utility and the outdoor beauty of the HVT. The Ring Road will be a commercial roadway with many driveway crossings into local businesses that are located, or will be built, along the Ring Road. Those crossings of the HVT will render it unsafe for all users, but particularly for bicyclists, young and old pedestrians, and children on bicycles or other wheeled vehicles. A sidewalk intersected by driveways, especially commercial or retail driveways, is not the equivalent of a non-motorized trail. While bicycling, running or walking along a trailway is a recreational experience, the same travel on a sidewalk intersected by driveways, especially commercial driveways, can be a deadly hazard, often more dangerous than simply riding in the roadway. A stretch of sidewalk in place of the existing trailway would weaken the HVT like a weak link in a chain. It would be a reversal of the progress made in the development of Michigan trailways and it would be a repudiation of the efforts of those who made the HVT possible. Many local, regional and statewide trailway advocates assisted the local communities of Lyon Township, City of South Lyon and Milford Township in acquiring the multiple sources of funding to develop the HVT into a marvelous regional asset.

Similarly, the proposed at-grade crossings by Ring Road over the HVT would reverse the progress represented by the HVT. This point was explained in the enclosed 2004 letter.

As I pointed out earlier the HVT is but one segment of the entire Airline Railroad corridor of over 100 miles. I know of no other trailway segments along the entire length of the Airline corridor where the trailway character and integrity would be so severely altered and damaged. It is unthinkable for such a marvelous asset in southeast Michigan to be marred by local commercial motivations.

While the HVT development was funded primarily by Federal Transportation Enhancement Funds and Michigan Natural Resources Trust Funds, there were also been contributions from non-profit Michigan bicycle organizations. I believe Michigan has an obligation to monitor and ensure that projects developed with trust fund and enhancement funding is not compromised and is properly maintained and operated for the benefit of all persons in Michigan, not just local commercial interests. Further, any alteration or disruption of the continuity of the Airline Railroad corridor may in fact violate the federal rail bank statutes under which it was originally acquired. The justification extolled by the sponsoring communities for the transportation enhancement funds was the value of the HVT as non-motorized transportation corridor for commuting workers, students and shoppers to the local venues. What a terrible contradiction for Lyon Township to now propose to dramatically degrade the transportation and safety value of the HVT. This is an example of the "Green Michigan" policy being trampled. The reduction of

energy consumption offered by cross-state and regional non-motorized transportation corridors should be enhanced and publicized, not disrupted and damaged.

I implore you to stop or reverse any decisions regarding the DNR-owned property on which the Huron Valley Trail occupies in the New Hudson area of Oakland County that will permanently detract from its beauty, utility and safety for all trailway users. Also, please do me the courtesy of advising me of your decision and relative actions.

Respectfully submitted,

Fred Dore, cyclist, Oakland County

Enclosures: 1) Mr. Fred Dore to Mr. Lowen Schuett, dated June 18, 2004
2) Giffels-Webster Engineers, Inc. to Mr. Paul Yauk, dated Dec. 7, 2006
3) Giffels-Webster Engineers, Inc., location map entitled, "Ring Road, Lyon Twp.", dated Nov. 8, 2006

Cc: Ms. Patricia Carcone, Chairperson, Western
Oakland County Trailway Management
Council

Mr. Lannie Young, Supervisor, Charter
Township of Lyon

Mr. Ron Olsen, Chief, Parks and Recreation
Division, MDNR

Ms. Nancy Krupiarz, Executive Director,
MTGA

Mr. Paul Yauk, Parks & Recreation Div.,
MDNR

Representative Hugh D. Crawford, District
038, Oakland County

Representative Lisa Brown, District 039,
Oakland County

Representative Joel Sheltroun, District 103,
Chair, Tourism, Outdoor Recreation and
Natural Resources Committee

Ms. Amber Thelen, TE Program
Coordinator, MDOT

Ms. Lana Pollack, Chair, Michigan Natural
Resources Trust Fund Board of Trustees

Mr. Keith J. Charters, Chair, Natural
Resources Commission

Mr. Josh DeBruyn, AICP, Bicycle and
Pedestrian Coordinator, MDOT

Mr. Jim Wood, Mgr., Grants Management,
MDNR

Ms. Linda Hegstrom, Grants Management,
MDNR

Mr. Thomas R. Morris, Cyclist, Oakland
County

Mr. James Sadler, Cyclist, Milford Twp.

Mr. Joe Dolan, Cyclist, Milford Twp.

Ms. Kristen Wiltfang, Oakland County
Planning

Todd Scott, cyclist, Oakland County