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December 13, 2024

Secretary, U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave., SE
Washington, DC 20590

Re: Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) Grant Application

Dear Secretary of Transportation:

I am writing to support the 2024 RAISE grant application partnership between the Allegan County Road Commission (ACRC) and the West Michigan Regional Planning Commission (WMRPC) to support the **Protecting Lake Michigan's Shoreline Communities: Reconnecting Lakeshore Drive Project**. Both agencies have identified the need to construct a new inland road for the Lake Michigan coastal community of Saugatuck Township, where the existing roadway is continuously impacted by severe coastal erosion. Since 1988, when the existing road (Lakeshore Drive) experienced a major washout that eliminated north-south access, residents, visitors, and emergency services have been impacted by the consistent erosion and washout of the roadway. The new proposed road will connect between 126th Avenue and 130th Avenue (Wiley Road), within Saugatuck Township. The total project cost is \$9,000,000, with a federal RAISE grant request of \$7,200,000, and a 20% match of \$1,800,000 through Michigan state funding and/or local funding options from the ACRC and Saugatuck Township.

The proposed project area is in 2020 Census Tracts 26005030801 and 26005030802; Allegan County; Michigan as described by the US Census Bureau. The project will be developed in a manner that highlights priorities identified in federal granting programs, for the purpose of addressing the long-term threat of coastal erosion in this community. The goal of this project is to maintain the connection and access of communities to the north and south of Lakeshore Drive using a complete streets design with a focus on safety, equity, climate change and sustainability, and workforce development. The planned new road will include a separated non-motorized path parallel to it to accommodate pedestrian and bicycle traffic.

I am confident in the capacity of ACRC and WMRPC to share responsibilities for development of this much-needed roadway. ACRC has completed conceptual planning, conducted a feasibility study and developed the preliminary plan, specifications and estimates (PS&E) for the proposed project. The necessary environmental, historical and archeological information needed to complete the project have also been identified. ACRC is also actively working to obtain right of way to construct the new road. ACRC will be leading the acquisition and transfer of property ownership, utility coordination, public engagement, and construction of the road and non-motorized path.



I respectfully request the USDOT give full consideration to ACRC's application for this construction effort and help shape the future of this idyllic part of Lake Michigan's Shoreline.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Aric Nesbitt". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Aric" being more prominent than the last name "Nesbitt".

Aric Nesbitt
State Senator
District 20