To Michigan State Senators and Representatives at Joint Session of Transportation Committees, at Canton, Mich. March 7, 2005

FIX IT FIRST AND MORE TRANSIT MONEY PLEASE

I speak for the majority of over 6,000 Sierra Club members in the 3 county S.E. Michigan region. Fixing the roadways that we now have is crucial to movement throughout the region even those newer areas that are now seeing more congestion. Let's not make this a suburb vs. older city issue. It just makes logical and fiscal sense to fix what we have before expanding.

It also makes logical, fiscal and moral sense to put more funding into public transit. Public transit can be a great decongestant. It can also save people money by not having to fund future road expansions, and by not having to purchase and operate second and third cars, and enabling people to get to work. It may even reduce unemployment, welfare and perhaps even crime. Public transit can greatly reduce air pollution, global warming and further increase health benefits by encouraging more walking. By investing in public transit, private investment follows; thereby reducing sprawl. As witnessed by many of us visiting other cities, public transit is the fundamental infrastructure that enhances that quality of life feeling that makes a city vibrant and a joy to visit. Wouldn't our region be more attractive to visitors if we had better transit alternatives?

What we as citizens need today from our Michigan legislators is leadership in this direction. It's time that both parties grow up and admit that they cannot continue to promise tax cuts. And not just the politicians, it's time that the electorate grows up too and not beat up every politician that proposes some tax increase. Of course, a tax increase has to be fair and reasonable so that people can see how they can benefit. Government does some good things and public transit is one of them. There is no free beer. We need to discuss how to implement tax revenues either through the gasoline tax, sales tax, property tax or combinations thereof. Other cities have done it, the most recent being Denver, Colorado.

The Detroit region is last in so many categories including transit. A good public transit system is crucial for our region to join the 21st century.

Thank you,

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