

August 12, 2010

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

Dear Mr. LaHood,

On behalf of Region Nine Development Commission, I am submitting this letter of support for the city of Mankato's portion of the Mn/DOT Complete Streets TIGER II grant application.

Region Nine Development Commission, located in Mankato, MN, serves 9 counties, 72 cities, 147 townships and 33 school districts in south central Minnesota. The 9 counties that comprise Region Nine are Blue Earth, Brown, Faribault, Le Sueur, Martin, Nicollet, Sibley, Waseca, and Watonwan.

As the Director of Community and Economic Development and Transportation for Region Nine, I am in constant contact with our local jurisdictions. Cities, towns, and counties cannot properly plan for future growth and economic development without maintaining an efficient and effective transportation and transit system.

The region is currently experiencing an increase in our aging population, an increase in our minority population, as well as an increasing number of students at the institutions of higher learning. This trend is expected to continue well into the future. As these transit dependent populations continue to increase, and more demand is placed on local transit services, it is imperative that our cities are able to keep up with this demand.

Region Nine Development Commission, along with the cities of Mankato and North Mankato, Blue Earth County, Nicollet County, Le Sueur County, Mn/DOT and Minnesota State University, Mankato, recently participated in a MATAPS (Mankato Area Transportation and Planning Study) planning project. MATAPS establishes a vision for meeting the long-range transportation needs of the Mankato/North Mankato region through the year 2035. MATAPS 2035, completed in July 2010, builds new ground by placing greater emphasis on multi-modal

planning. Specifically, this plan addresses multiple aspects of the transportation system, including roadways, transit operations, non-motorized facilities, and rail (freight and passenger) operations.

Providing greater efficiency and serving a larger demographic group were very important to the partners in the MATAPS planning process. The city of Mankato, which serves the area as a regional hub for health care, retail, employment, and education, currently provides transit services to the residents of Mankato and North Mankato; however, there is a much greater need throughout the region. Mankato is the county seat for Blue Earth County. Currently Blue Earth County, along with Nicollet County (North Mankato), Le Sueur County, and Waseca County, do not have county-wide transit services. It is the goal of Region Nine to facilitate providing transit services to all residents of these four counties, by accessing the expertise of the existing Mankato transit system, which again, would place additional demand on the current system. By relocating and expanding their facilities, this would allow the Mankato transit system the ability to serve a greater portion of the residents in the 4-county region.

The improvements that would be funded under the TIGER II grant would allow the city of Mankato to provide greater services, a more efficient system, and meet the needs of a larger portion of our transit dependent populations. This would be achieved by moving the existing services, from their current location, to the proposed location, which in turn will provide greater visibility and access to current and potential users as well as more efficiency in the delivery of transit services.

The mission of Region Nine Development Commission is to “promote the development of the region through intergovernmental cooperation and community and human development”. It is our vision/goal to “maintain a future-oriented perspective that helps facilitate decisions which result in healthier and more prosperous communities that are better equipped to move forward into the future”. This project is aligned perfectly with the mission, vision, and goals of the Region Nine Development Commission and we fully support this project.

Respectfully submitted,

Ronda Allis  
Director of Community and Economic Development and Transportation