



RICK SNYDER
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
LANSING

KIRK T. STEUDLE
DIRECTOR

July 17, 2012

Ms. Terri Blackmore, Executive Director
Washtenaw Area Transportation Study
705 North Zeeb Road
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48103-1560

Dear Ms. Blackmore:

It has come to my attention that the Washtenaw Area Transportation Study (WATS) is exploring the possibility of being designated and recognized as a separate Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Ann Arbor urbanized area and communities in Washtenaw County.

Presently, the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG) serves as the federally recognized MPO for the entire seven-county region of southeast Michigan, which includes Washtenaw County and the urbanized areas of Ann Arbor, Detroit, Brighton-Howell-South Lyon, Monroe, and Port Huron. SEMCOG has served as the MPO for the region since 1968 and has worked cooperatively with WATS since its inception in the early 1970s. All of the counties represented by SEMCOG have local committees that allow them to prioritize funding and make important decisions regarding infrastructure investments. Local priorities are submitted to SEMCOG and approved by their committee structure, which includes representation from Washtenaw County. These projects are then forwarded to the Michigan Department of Transportation and our federal partners for approval and funding. This process involves cooperation, collaboration, and consistency among all the members of SEMCOG and has served the region well for decades.

The SEMCOG transportation planning process recently received a commendation for "a process or practice that demonstrates innovative, highly effective, well-thought-out procedures for implementing the planning requirements" by the Federal Highway and Federal Transit Administrations during their 2012 certification review. This is exactly the kind of collaboration and cooperation the Governor of the State of Michigan is encouraging statewide.

The goal of the Snyder administration and MDOT is to make government more efficient and promote the wise coordination of infrastructure investments that allow regions in the state to better compete globally. It has been a focus of this administration to promote greater collaboration through regions and across programmatic silos.

The current trend in census and urban area planning analysis shows that larger regional connections and cooperation is preferred at both the state and national levels. Therefore, it would be counterproductive to break out a single county, single purpose transportation organization from a multi-county, multi-purpose metropolitan organization that is nationally recognized for its transportation planning activities and cooperative processes.

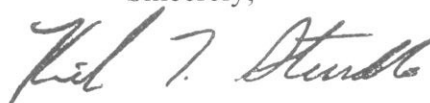
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There are many important transportation improvements happening in southeast Michigan, including: the recent agreement between Michigan and Canada for a new border crossing; the proposed Regional Transportation Authority legislation to address transit coordination issues throughout the region; the Detroit-Chicago Accelerated Rail Project, which will travel through the Detroit and Ann Arbor urbanized areas; and the Ann Arbor-Detroit Commuter Rail Project. At a time when these great and exciting things are occurring in southeast Michigan, separating and becoming a stand-alone entity would be the direct opposite of what Governor Snyder and current trends support.

I urge WATS to work collaboratively as an integral part of the greater Detroit Metropolitan Region and reap the benefits of cooperation and team work to continue to move our great state forward. I do not support a separate MPO designation for WATS.

If you have any questions, please contact either me or David E. Wresinski, Director, Bureau of Transportation Planning, at 517-373-0343. Please share this letter with your Policy Committee members as soon as possible. A copy is being sent to WATS Policy Committee Chairperson, James Carson.

Sincerely,



Kirk T. Steudle
Director

cc: James Carson, WATS Policy Committee Chair