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March 21, 2014

Re: Grayling Region I-75 Access Project
Letter of Support

To whom it may concern:

Please accept this letter of support for funding of the Crawford County Road Commission's Grayling Region I-75 Access Project.

This construction project will upgrade the I-75/North Down River Road interchange from half to full access (allowing both north- and southbound motorists to enter and exit I-75 from North Down River Road), improve the North Down River Road corridor, and replace the structurally-deficient and functionally obsolete North Down River Road bridge over the East Branch of the AuSable River.

The project will provide more direct access to/from I-75, improve connectivity between the Grayling areas east and west of I-75, improve emergency response times and access to Mercy Hospital Grayling, alleviate traffic congestion, fix dilapidated transportation infrastructure, reduce fuel consumption and vehicle emissions by improving efficiency, makes multi-modal connections, and improves access to Camp Grayling Joint Maneuver Training Facility.

As the Crawford County Road Commission's Consulting Engineers, Northwest Design Group has been involved with transportation planning and design of the county's transportation facilities for many years and have been closely involved in the planning and design of this project. Through providing our technical expertise for the project, we have seen firsthand how important this project is to the community and region.

The planning and design for the project is based on sound technical principles and data: The Grayling Area Transportation Study was prepared in 2008 and provides measurements and projections of traffic volumes. It was updated in 2012 by supplemental traffic counts. NDG has performed bridge inspections of the NDRR Bridge over E Br AuSable River since 1994 and have watched this bridge gradually deteriorate, despite significant expenditures of preventative maintenance dollars. Our rigorous cost-benefit and economic analyses for use in applying for federal funding under the USDOT's TIGER program have demonstrated to us how necessary this project is and that the project benefits are *real*. Aside from the very clear economic and environmental benefits, the potential *life saving benefits* that are certain to accrue by improving emergency access between I-75 and Mercy Hospital Grayling *justifies the project alone*.

As civil engineers, we are involved with the construction industry and see every day, firsthand how depressed this industry is. Beside the long-term benefits, this job will provide a very significant boost to this industry by creating construction jobs, and supporting businesses such as ours. As civil engineers, we have a professional responsibility to safeguard the public's interests. Finishing this interchange clearly delivers on that responsibility.

We urge you to recognize the overarching support and commitment the Crawford County community has shown in developing this project. While this project's cost would seem modest in other areas or in other industries, it represents an investment that will result in enormous payback in this economically distressed area. Please assist the Crawford County Road Commission in procuring funds to construct this project.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you wish to discuss this project further.

Respectfully submitted,



HOWARD J. HASELSCHWARDT, P.E.
President