

May 7th, 2014

House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee, Chairman Wayne Schmidt

RE: HR4925 (H-1) – TRANSPORTATION: PUBLIC - PRIVATE AGREEMENTS, Sponsor: Rep Marilyn Lane

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Has the 'missing link' been found? I think it has.

I fully support Rep Lane's Bill HR 4925 (H-1). And I thank her for it.

HR 4925 (H-1) – the bill to amend Public Act 286 of 1964 to authorize the Department of Transportation to enter into certain public-private agreements is the 'missing link' – the link that can wed Public Act 74 & 75 -2012, the act that allows for the transfer of the publicly owned 163 acre Michigan State Fairgrounds site in Detroit, and Public Act 387 of 2012 – the act creating a Regional Transit Authority (RTA) to provide regional transportation to the four county region of Wayne, Oakland, Macomb and Washtenaw.

The wedding of these two bills is a match made in heaven - and Rep Lane is the 'matchmaker'.

Can there be a more a more suitable location for a regional, multi-modal, transportation hub than the Michigan State Fairgrounds? Bounded by Woodward and Eight Mile on two sides, at one time the busiest intersection in the state, AND on a third side by an active rail line that serves as Amtrak's Wolverine line from Chicago to Pontiac and that will soon serve the commuter rail link from Ann Arbor to Detroit. Having a REGIONAL transit hub *at* your Fairgrounds & Exposition Center – it's perfect.

The RTA legislation allows for the acquisition of land both for operational use as well as revenue generation. Why shouldn't the Regional Transit Authority, alone, or in conjunction with a Fairgrounds Authority own the Fairgrounds? Why shouldn't MDOT help them get it? With this bill – they can.

MDOT not only has the authority to make this happen; but with the ability to enter into public-private agreements, they will have the mechanism for turning a state neglected asset into an iconic, multi-modal, REGIONAL Transit Center and year-round Fairgrounds & Exposition Center that will attract visitors from all over the world to Michigan. Wouldn't this be a good thing?

Now is not the time to dispose of the Fairgrounds to private interests for retail BIG BOX development that can be built anywhere. Stop this transfer. It's an illegal sale anyway. Keep this public asset – public.

Now is the time for the MDOT Director and the State Transportation Commission to lead the way into the future with regional transportation for Southeast Michigan based at the Fairgrounds.

Now is the time for this Committee to pass this bill and insure that it happens.

Pressing on, with (a lot of) unwavering faith,

Jim Casha