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November 21, 2019

Bob Ranck
Region Engineer
Michigan Department of Transportation
5859 Sherman Road
Saginaw, MI 48604

Subject: Buttles Street Road Diet Trial Completion

Dear Mr. Ranck,

As you know, the City of Midland and MDOT have been working together to determine the future of the US BR-10 corridor as it passes through the City of Midland. Of particular note, we have been working together on a trial road diet along the Buttles Street corridor, running between Jerome Street and State Street through the edge of our downtown area. The trial started in the spring of 2018 and continues today.

One of the complicating factors in the road diet trail has been the construction of the M-20 Bridge crossing the Tittabawassee River. That construction had the effect of altering normal traffic flows along Jerome Street and heading into the stretch of Buttles Street subject to the trial. As such, both the City of Midland and MDOT fully understood that the bridge construction would need to be completed and regular traffic flows reestablished before final traffic data in the road diet trial area could be collected. It was also made clear to the City by MDOT staff that adequate data after full reopening of the M-20 Bridge would be necessary for MDOT to be able to consider and potentially approve a permanent reduction in the number of lanes on Buttles Street. The initial and still public statement of MDOT was that this last phase of the data collection could take as long as one year after the M-20 Bridge was completed. City and MDOT staff have, however, been actively discussing an earlier end to the trial as soon as adequate data has been collected to meet MDOT's decision-making needs.

Construction of the M-20 Bridge is now nearing full and final completion. On October 29, 2019, all four lanes on the bridge were reopened to vehicular traffic. With that, the flow of traffic has returned to normal patterns. We are advised that traffic data is being collected by MDOT to verify that the volumes of traffic along this corridor have also returned to normal. Our expectation, three weeks post opening, is that this has taken place.

Consistent with the position that City staff has taken with you and your staff, Midland City Council has now formally asked that the road diet trial end as soon as possible. At their regular meeting held on November 18, 2019, they passed the following resolution:

RESOLVED, that City Council instruct the City Manager, on behalf of City Council, to send a letter to MDOT requesting that the Road Diet be completed by the end of the year if they have the information needed, and if not, that they come and explain why, and what else is needed in January.

Based on the motion adopted by City Council, the City is asking that the road diet trial be ended by December 31, 2019. That request is tempered by the acknowledgement that sufficient data must first be collected to ensure that a decision can be made and substantiated when the time comes for that decision. To be very clear, the City has no desire to end the trial prematurely and then be faced with the possibility of having to replicate it at a later time should a decision to reduce travel lanes be further pursued. So, while the City is of the opinion that two full months of data following the opening of the M-20 Bridge should be sufficient for that purpose, we also acknowledge that it is MDOT, and not the City of Midland, that must make that determination. Should MDOT disagree or otherwise believe that sufficient data to make a decision will not be collected by December 31, 2019, City Council has then requested that MDOT appear before City Council to discuss what additional data is needed and what the process moving forward from there will look like.

As always, our goal is to work cooperatively with MDOT. I am confident based on past discussions that both MDOT and the City have the common goal of ending this trial and data collection process as soon as the data provides MDOT with a sufficient basis to recommend whether a reduction in travel lanes can or cannot be considered. I am hopeful that can take place in accord with the timing requested by Midland City Council.

One final point, just to clarify previous conversations. There has been some confusion in the community over what will take once the data has been collected and the trial ends. The City position on this has always been that the temporary traffic control devices (plastic bollards) be removed at that time and the three lane road profile be restored. As it will undoubtedly be a number of years before funding is made available and the full rebuild of this corridor is undertaken, the City does not want the bollards to remain following the trial while decisions are made, funding is (hopefully) secured for whatever road configuration is ultimately decided upon, and road reconstruction takes place. My understanding is that MDOT staff understand this position of the City and agree with it.

With apologies for the length of this letter, I look forward to hearing back from you in response to City Council's request. Should you need any further information from myself or other City staff, please let me know at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,



C. Bradley Kaye, AICP CFM
City Manager

Copy Midland City Council
Bill Mayhew, MDOT
Jay Reithel, MDOT
Josh Fredrickson, City Engineer
Grant Murschel, City Planning Director
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