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Resources, Inc.**

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**STAFF**

Danna Widmar, Executive Director  
Preston McGregor

December 23, 2009

Jack Jones  
5051 Jones Landing  
Petoskey, MI 49770

Dear Jack,

On September 30<sup>th</sup>, the Harbor Area Regional Board of Resources, Inc. (HARBOR, Inc.) conducted a regular quarterly meeting of the Board of Directors. Martha Lancaster presented the Friends Enhancing Emmet Transit (FEET) Initiative and requested support from HARBOR, Inc. The Board discussed this issue in detail and decided that the Executive Committee of HARBOR, Inc. should send a letter to you to document ideas generated, rather than vote on an endorsement.

The HARBOR, Inc. Board of Directors works on quality of life initiatives based on cooperation, education and analysis of plans and projects. In doing this, the HARBOR, Inc. Board is sensitive to the decision making responsibilities of individual Board members, particularly elected and appointed officials in the various communities which HARBOR, Inc. serves. Therefore, the HARBOR, Inc. decision relative to the FEET initiative was done to respect the important decision making role of the Emmet County Commissioners.

In response to the FEET initiative, the HARBOR, Inc. Executive Committee discussed this issue in detail at multiple meetings (in addition to the September 30<sup>th</sup> meeting of the overall Board). A few key points that were discussed include:

- It is our understanding that a citizen petition may not be legally possible to accomplish the objectives of the FEET committee. Therefore, it can only be placed on the ballot at the County level if County Commissioners vote to do so.
- The underlying philosophy of public transportation is a sound idea. Alternative transportation and coordination of regional services is consistent with the HARBOR, Inc. mission and strategic plan.
- A business plan will be necessary to fully evaluate the specifics of a system in Emmet County.
- Other successful examples exist that may warrant close evaluation, including the Benzie Bus system.
- Public Transit is a need for low and moderate income families for many reasons. A consistent, regular system should create ease of access that is essential to those individuals.
- The bike rack concept, along with the completion of the Little Traverse Wheelway, creates an opportunity for business professionals to use a combination of alternative transportation means to help improve on the summer traffic issues.
- A bus system should respect both environmental and economic circumstances in Emmet County.

**ENVISION TOMORROW ~ COOPERATE TODAY**

HARBOR, Inc. • P.O. Box 112 • Harbor Springs, Michigan 49740 • 231-526-5060 • [info@harborinc.org](mailto:info@harborinc.org)

In addition to the materials provided by FEET, HARBOR, Inc. evaluated materials from the American Planning Association (APA). Some information in the APA adopted policy statement on surface transportation was applicable to this effort. All documents reviewed by HARBOR, Inc. (including the APA document) are available at [www.harborinc.org/feet.asp](http://www.harborinc.org/feet.asp). The APA adopted surface transportation policy statements and notes relative to Emmet County have been included, below:

- 1. Comprehensive, multimodal transportation planning is the basis of investment decisions.**
- 2. Public involvement in transportation planning is necessary and desirable.**
- 3. Levels of government share responsibility for and interest in transportation decisions.** *In Emmet County, tribal and public school decision-makers may have an important role.*
- 4. Transportation decisions should produce broad public benefits.** *In particular in Emmet County, other public benefits of environmental quality, growth management, housing affordability and economic development should be considered with this issue.*
- 5. Plans and programs should be fiscally responsible.** *Evaluation should include realistic assessments of fiscal resources that are or will be available for project design, construction, operation, and maintenance.*
- 6. Adequate funding is needed.** *Adequate funding is the best way to ensure cross agency and multimodal cooperation in planning and delivering an effective, balanced transportation system that serves diverse needs.*

After those discussions occurred, the Fall 2009 Edition of Planning Commissioners Journal published an article entitled "Planning for Public Transportation in Rural Communities." That article has enclosed for your reference. It is our hope that some of this information proves useful in your evaluation of the FEET initiative. Thank you for your time and commitment to Emmet County.

Sincerely,



Danna Widmar, AICP  
H.A.R.B.O.R., Inc. Executive Director