Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 21, 2014

The Honorable Barack H. Obama
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We are writing to urge your prompt attention to an important infrastructure project proposed to be constructed along the northern border, a project vital to our nation's security and economic future which will create thousands of jobs in Michigan.

For more than a decade, the State of Michigan, in close partnership with the Canadian government, the Province of Ontario, and several U.S. government agencies, studied the need and feasibility of a new international border crossing along the Detroit-Windsor border. The results of this study, a plan to build the New International Trade Crossing (NITC), was determined by the U.S. State Department to serve the national interest, and, in its April 12, 2013 statement announcing the approval of the NITC's Presidential Permit, the Department noted the project "...will help to meet future capacity requirements in a critical travel corridor, promote cross-border trade and commerce, and advance our vital bilateral relationship with Canada."

The plan to build the NITC calls for a six-lane bridge spanning the Detroit River between Detroit and Windsor, enhancing a vital trade corridor by linking I-75 and I-94 in Michigan to Highway 401 in Ontario. This is the busiest international crossing with Canada in terms of trade volume. In fact, this corridor experiences 7,000 daily truck crossings, and traffic is projected to steadily increase. The existing 85-year-old Ambassador Bridge, which is privately owned, has only four lanes to accommodate commercial vehicles. We risk further hampering international trade if border capacity is not increased to meet the projected growth. The NITC will also address the critical need for infrastructure redundancy to ensure uninterrupted traffic flow between Ontario and Michigan during times of real or perceived threats to the border.

The bi-national cooperation seen throughout the NITC's planning process has been exceptional. Officials on both sides of the border recognized early on the importance this project holds for supporting and enhancing the vital trade relationship from which both countries benefit. In fact, one unique aspect of this project is Canada's commitment to finance both its portion and most of the land acquisition and construction activities in Michigan. In addition, up to $550 million of these pledged funds are eligible to be leveraged as the required match for U.S. Federal Highway funded projects in Michigan for years to come.

This project enjoys broad bipartisan support from U.S. business, labor and political leaders, including Michigan's governor and all previous governors and Detroit Mayor Mike Duggan. Canada is our top trade partner, and several state legislatures, including Ohio, Indiana, Kentucky and Alabama, have passed resolutions supporting the NITC. This project will

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immediately create thousands of direct and indirect jobs in Michigan and neighboring states. It will increase the speed at which goods are delivered and improve the reliability and predictability of supply chains. It will also be an important part of Detroit's recovery. State officials envision the NITC as part of an effort to harness Michigan's unique resources and infrastructure, catalyzing the creation of one or more transportation, distribution and logistics hubs to spur long-term economic growth and job creation in the area.

Unfortunately, funding the U.S. Federal Plaza has emerged as an unresolved issue that could delay the NITC. We have been told by U.S. Customs and Border Protection and the General Services Administration that they do not have the resources available to build a new plaza on the U.S. side of the border. The agencies involved have also met with representatives of the State of Michigan and the Canadian Government to discuss their budgetary limitations. Under the agreement between the State of Michigan and Canada, this would leave Canada responsible for the cost of constructing the $250 million U.S. Federal Plaza. Canada has already committed a sizeable sum to finance the land acquisition and construction of the new bridge. This plaza would be located on U.S. soil and operated by the U.S. government, so Canada is understandably hesitant to pay for a customs plaza in the United States. We would also like to note that there is a separate funding shortage involving the customs plaza at the Blue Water Bridge in Port Huron that still needs to be resolved.

Given the importance of this project to international trade and to the economy of Michigan, it is our hope that the groups involved can come together to resolve the funding concerns about the U.S. Federal Plaza. If U.S. Customs and Border Protection cannot supply the funds necessary to construct the plaza, we need to explore alternative financing options including public-private partnerships or the leasing of the facility by the U.S. Government. A solution must no doubt be multi-faceted and necessitate significant communications and coordination among several federal agencies, the State of Michigan, and Canada. Therefore, we request that you designate a senior White House official with the responsibility of coordinating and negotiating a way to move this vital project forward. We would also appreciate your keeping the Michigan Congressional delegation informed of any developments.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Carl Levin
U.S. Senator

Debbie Stabenow
U.S. Senator

John D. Dingell
Member of Congress

John Conyers, Jr.
Member of Congress

Sander M. Levin
Member of Congress

Gary C. Peters
Member of Congress

Daniel T. Kildee
Member of Congress

CC: The Honorable Jeh Johnson, Secretary, U.S. Department of Homeland Security
The Honorable Sylvia Mathews Burwell, Director, Office of Management and Budget
The Honorable Anthony Foxx, Secretary, U.S. Department of Transportation
The Honorable Dan M. Tangherlini, Administrator, U.S. General Services Administration
The Honorable Gene Sperling, Director, National Economic Council and Assistant to the President for Economic Policy
The Honorable Don Graves, Executive Director of the President's Council on Jobs and Competitiveness and Deputy Assistant Secretary for Small Business, Community Development and Housing Policy, U.S. Department of the Treasury