



Mr. Robert Mariner  
TIGER II Discretionary Grant Program Manager  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. Mariner:

August 17, 2010

The Mason County Growth Alliance Board of Directors unanimously supports the Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER II) discretionary funding grant application to re-power the S.S. Badger, the historic Lake Michigan car ferry operating between Ludington, MI and Manitowoc, WI. Registered in 1997 as a historic site by the Michigan and Wisconsin historic commissions and designated by the National Register for Historic Places in 2009, the Badger is the last coal-fired ferry of her kind still operating in the world.

The MCGA estimates the total direct and indirect economic impact of the S.S. Badger transportation link on Manitowoc and Ludington to be in the tens of millions of dollars annually. The Badger (LMC) employs 200 staff, transports more than 100,000 passengers every year and offers energy-saving transportation for passenger vehicles, trucks, large equipment and oversized loads too cumbersome or cost prohibitive to ship by ground transportation around the lake.

The City of Ludington's application has significant statewide, regional, national and even international implications to transportation, travel and tourism, energy efficiencies and environmental protection in and around the Great Lakes. The proposed project meets or exceeds all primary and secondary funding criteria including maintaining strategic transportation corridors, utilization for homeland security and emergency response capabilities. Even though the project is classified as rural with no matching requirement, LMC plans to invest \$2 million in this national infrastructure investment, making it a prioritized, rural public/private collaborative.

Although the Badger's economic impact is evident, its cultural value to the communities in Wisconsin and Michigan is a distinguishing feature of this application. The Badger is truly the historic icon of ferry boat service on the Great Lakes and has had a profound impact on the lives of residents and visitors to the Midwest for more than a half century. The vessel's cultural and economic values are inextricably linked to future socio-economic progress throughout the region.

Lake Michigan car ferries began operations 20 years before the RMS Titanic set out on its maiden voyage in 1912. Analogous to that ill-fated ship, the S.S. Badger is also sending an S.O.S. distress signal, this time for financial assistance. Maritime law requires mariners to heed the call and we are relying on the Department of Transportation to respond to ours.

Sincerely yours,

Bob Barker, President/CEO

