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Dr. Charles McClaugherty  
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Alliance, OH 44601

RE: STARS Innovation Credit

To Whom It May Concern:

I would like to attest to the fact that the University of Mount Union has made a radical commitment to shift the modes of transportation on its campus, removing interior roads, reducing paving and increasing its green space, bettering the health and well-being of both the campus and the surrounding community. This action is highly innovative in this town and in this region of Ohio, where cars continue to dominate city and campus designs. Having served as a Planning Commissioner in past years, I can affirm that the idea of removing streets altogether, compelling the complete adoption of travel by foot and bicycle, is highly innovative in this town and county, even on a college campus. By not only closing the majority of its internal roads, but also entirely removing the asphalt and re-grading and replacing the roadways and sidewalks with landscaping, the transportation paradigm has entirely shifted.

By replacing the large areas of dark asphalt with expanses of landscaped areas and right-sized reflective concrete pedestrian and bicycle paths, the potential for heat island effect has been significantly reduced, and the potential for carbon absorption increased. One aspect which is particularly innovative is the way in which the paved areas were entirely redesigned as green areas, rather than simply closing the paved areas to vehicles. Dozens of large trees were planted in groves as a part of the landscaping effort, providing shade and new habitat. Large areas were re-graded, removing storm drains and allowing for more natural absorption of storm water.

As a part of this effort, sidewalks along the state routes that border the campus were widened, in part to facilitate the linkage of a regional bicycle trail, the IronHorse Trail, which traverses the town and intersects the University campus. This trail, sections of which already exist north and south of campus, links the campus to a revitalized

downtown arts district and weekly Farmer's Market, as well as to a network of bike paths throughout the county which in turn link to trails throughout northeast Ohio. By closing interior streets and emphasizing the use of bicycles on campus, the University has also strengthened its connection to this larger network of trails, fortifying the biking culture, and increasing the quality of life and potential for healthful exercise and experience of the outdoors for all of the city. Their leadership has encouraged further improvements of pedestrian walks linking the University to the revitalized downtown area, potentially furthering the economic well-being of this older area of town. This campus improvement may be the game-changer for the culture of sustainable transportation and development in Alliance.

Sincerely,

Tiffany A. L. Gravlee