Thank you for the opportunity to put comment toward the draft transportation plan for Northern Ontario: Connecting the North.

Firstly, I agree with Minister Caroline Mulroney's quote in her Minister’s Message on page 2 “Working together I am confident that this plan will help us build a transportation network for Northern Ontario that is better connected and more efficient.” It is imperative that we work together to improve highway conditions, transportation reliability and connectedness throughout northern Ontario. Throughout the comment section, I have tried to illustrate and expound upon the goals and action items as I see them affecting Hornepayne, Hornepayne's immediate regions, and northern Ontario as a whole. I would be led to believe that there are many more northern Ontario municipalities and communities that could identify with the comments that I have listed.

I have encouraged several community members, mayors and first nations communities across northern Ontario to submit comment to the plan and thank the ministry and the province for the extensive action items that cover a majority of concerns in Northern Ontario’s transportation network. I am pleased to see that it is an inclusive plan that talks about air, road and rail. I am also pleased that the plan talks about the challenges and the impacts of COVID-19 to northern Ontario. It is good that the plan explicitly states “ while the COVID-19 outbreak has created immediate challenges, it has also highlighted the importance of building reliable transportation infrastructure in northern Ontario.” we must not leave parts of our province vulnerable, and now that these deficiencies have been highlighted in northern Ontario the province can act.

First and foremost, it needs to be pointed out that a gross oversight has happened in putting together all the Maps listed in the draft transportation plan. Hornepayne, the geographical centre of Ontario Needs to be included on all the Maps within the plan. Hornepayne’s, Hwy 631 needs to be illustrated in the plan and showing a higher significance as we join the two trans Canada highways Hwy 11 to the North and Hwy 17 to the South as an alternate route when these highways are closed for a variety of reasons.

The vision for the northern Ontario transportation system that is outlined on page 22 of the draft plan and the six goals that will allow that vision to come to fruition are outstanding. Thank you.

Action item 12 goal 1

Hornepayne needs a shuttle service to be connected to the Ontario Northland bus routes North of us in Hearst Ontario and South of us and White River. We did have an Ontario Northland bus running through for Hornepayne to be connected to Hearst Ontario Monday through Friday with a shuttle bus that connects to the Ontario North line route out of Hearst. Many of the community residents in Hornepayne use facilities and healthcare in Hearst Ontario for example the dentist, chiropractor and the new cat scan machine. Until Hornepayne can grow some of these facilities themselves we need to be connected and it makes sense to have a daily bus shuttle service to Hearst that allows for our seniors to utilize the Hearst conveniences

Action item number 7 under goal one needs to be implemented regarding safety for both cyclists and motor vehicles using Hwy 17 on the North Shore of Lake Superior. This is a beautiful part of northern Ontario and we would like to see it highlighted and traffic increased by tourism and locals exploring the vast trail systems, canoeing, and kayaking routes, and the provincial and national parks.

Action item number 10 under goal one speaks of the establishment of a task force led by MTO it would be my pleasure as the mayor of Hornepayne to sit on this task force that will focus on the transportation needs and opportunities in northern Ontario with a strong emphasis on ensuring people can travel more efficiently and connect to critical services.

Action #14 gold one

Hornepayne has received the joint funding from the from the province and the federal counterpart for the improvements to our local airport. We are hoping that Hornepayne would be considered for a regional airport that would have regular scheduled flights two bigger centres for example Toronto or Thunder Bay. Currently the mine just South of us changes out approximately a ¼ of it’s workforce every Wednesday. There is opportunity to create a plan to have a regularly scheduled flight from Toronto into Hornepayne at least once a week to start.

Action item 16 goal 1

Hornepayne currently has no regular bus service, air service or regular rail passenger service to provide residents access to health care, education opportunities, and other services located in larger city. This hinders the people that we can attract to Hornepayne because they must have their own reliable transportation available to them to relocate to our area. Hornepayne needs service industry workers and we would like to be on be able to offer them benefits to moving to our community. We need to work together with the province in Ontario Northland to ensure that Hornepayne is not left off the map and that our community can be connected to the rest of the province. Hornepayne would like to be included in the second intake of the public transit stream that approved significant dollars to small northern Ontario communities.

Action item 15 goal 1

This goal is a bit vague to me and I would like to understand better how Hornepayne can capitalize and understand what we can do on our end to ensure that both the province, northern Ontario and Hornepayne can successfully implement a public transit across the North.

Action item 23 goal 2

Along with transportation we need to ensure that communities have proper accommodations too house tourists and workers in our communities. We need to ensure that all communities have equal opportunity in participating in the economic opportunities that are being made present in the plan. At present it is concerning to me as my small community Hornepayne is not represented well in the plan thus far. I am encouraged through this comment period that we will be able to impact the draft plan and see Hornepayne benefiting from the final document.

Action item 30 goal 3

It is very important to the residents of Hornepayne and the general area to modernize the winter maintenance contracts including adding more equipment where warranted. There must be a better way to maintain the roads in northern Ontario. people traveling in the North need to be assured that the roads are well enough, maintained enough, plowed enough, to ensure their safety as they get from point A to point B. We thank the government for the improvements that have been made and hope that the current level of service for Hwy 631 is not diminished.

Action item 36 goal 3

The action item also needs to include that the province will help municipalities incorporate Bell only crossings and help with the costs to ensure that the safety at the railway crossing meets all the regulatory requirements to have Bell only crossings. It would make a significant difference to the residence, tourists, workers and investors if our community to have Bell only Crossings. We currently have two crossings that are 500 meters apart within the municipality that run directly through town with the full 14 L whistle requirements, which as you can imagine, vibrate through the entire community. I am sure that there are other communities within northern Ontario that this is a significant issue, noise pollution and frustration that northern Ontarians endure. We would like to start the process but we need help with funds to incorporate the necessary infrastructure.

Action item 45 goal 4

It is imperative that northern Ontario understand the impacts that are coming with electric and hydrogen vehicles. We need to have a place in northern Ontario where CV/AV’s are being actively researched tested and piloted. The geographical centre of Ontario, Hornepayne would be the perfect place for this testing facility.

Action item 51 goal 5 is in conjunction with action item 30 goal 3

It is imperative to the safety of northern Ontarians have support in improved snow and ice control maintenance activities.

Action item 57 goal 6

The transportation plan needs to include key areas that the province supports for scheduled air flights. We need to be able to provide investors, tourists, and residents multiple options when traveling in and around and out of northern Ontario. As Hornepayne is the geographical centre of Ontario, it makes sense to have a regional airport in Hornepayne. We are the centre of not only Ontario but also within northern Ontario we connect the northwest and the northeast.

Action item 62 goal 6

We need to ensure that we have enough supports within the Ontario provincial police admission Abby ASCII police services in both manpower and equipment to be able to monitor winter roads, enabling them to spot hazardous driving and respond to emergencies in a timely manner. Northern Ontario covers vast distances as the draft document states on page 8 that northern Ontario comprises almost 90% of Ontario’s landmass, we need money spent to ensure our highways are well maintained and safe. This includes investing across ministries in the Ontario provincial police, the health care system, the education system, and Ontario Northland.

Action item 63 goal 6

The Ring of Fire area will bring about significant changes to the landscape and the way northern Ontario and First Nation communities interact. We need to ensure as we are building roads, airports, rail infrastructure and new routing areas that we are also building in the relationships between municipalities and First Nations that will create a resilience and strength of northern Ontario that this province has not seen before. We need to ensure that the current railway lines are maintained and that those significant areas of connection are not lost. Specifically, I think of all Algoma central railway which is currently up for sale we need to ensure that if there is not a buyer for this rail opportunity that Ontario Northland has the opportunity. We must not lose sight of the fact that Hornepayne is the centre link between Toronto and Winnipeg for the northern route of the Canadian National Railway and a key stop along the via rail Canadian number one services. The people currently working out of Hornepayne to service rail industries. Hornepayne is an asset with established railyards within the community, and in Oba which connects rail to the North East through Ontario Northland in Hearst Ontario and to the South East to Sault Ste Marie through Algoma central rail. We need to ensure that these routes are kept and maintained so that as the prosperity in the far North happens, we can support the First Nation communities by transporting the mineral goods across North America.