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November 19, 2004

Albert H. Rascoe, P.E., Highway Superintendent
Clinton County Highway Department
736 Route 3
Plattsburgh, NY 12901

Frederick H. Buck
Essex County Department of Public Works
Elizabethtown, NY 12932

Re: Historic Ausable River Bridges

Dear Mr. Rascoe and Mr. Buck,

I appreciate your quick response to my recent letter about the fate of the Old State Road Bridge in Ausable Chasm and I am delighted that we may be of help in assisting the County to explore its rehabilitation.

In thinking about this matter, it occurred to me that, rather than deal with one historic bridge at a time, there might be some wisdom and efficiency in taking care of the four historic Ausable River bridges that are your joint or sole responsibility. By looking for funding for these bridges as a group, I think it would greatly enhance the probability of getting funded. The bridges are:

➤ **Old State Road Bridge** (ca. 1890). Pratt pony truss bridge. Currently closed. Carries the Old State Road through the hamlet of Ausable Chasm. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

➤ **Swing Bridge** (1888). Pedestrian suspension bridge in Keeseville built by the Berlin Iron Bridge Company. In use as a pedestrian bridge, no known problems but may need preventative maintenance to ensure its longevity. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places and as a National Historic Civil Engineering Landmark.

➤ **Upper Bridge** (1878). Pratt through truss bridge in Keeseville, oldest of its type in New York State and one of only 70 cast and wrought iron bridges in the United States. In use with a three ton limit, no known problems but probably

requires preventative maintenance. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places and as a National Historic Civil Engineering Landmark.

- **Walton Bridge** (ca. 1890). Parabolic or lenticular truss bridge built by the Berlin Iron Bridge Company over the East Branch of the Ausable River in Keene. One of only forty of this type still in existence. Currently closed to vehicular use. Pedestrian use only. Extent of problems not known. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Besides the normal federal and state funding for bridge repair and maintenance, these bridges would qualify for at least two other major historic preservation programs. These are the New York State Environmental Protection Fund and the federal TEA-21 Transportation Enhancement program. As you know, we have some experience with the TEA-21 program, as we wrote the successful \$1.2 million application for Saratoga County to rehabilitate the Bow Bridge in Hadley.

I think packaging a “four bridge rehabilitation” application would have several things going for it. First, it would show that the counties are taking an intelligent and comprehensive approach to caring for the historic bridges in their care. As you know, New York State has recently completed a major historic bridge inventory and adopted new policies for the care of its remaining historic bridges. A similar effort by the counties would be seen very favorably in this light. Second, collectively these bridges have a national significance that would help to rate this proposal very highly. Third, these are bridges much loved by the public and for which there would be a lot of public support. Fourth, there may be some economy of scale efficiency if the counties should contract the rehabilitation work as a group. Lastly, the counties may be able to use their own bridge rehabilitation crews (Clinton County only?) and the value of their time towards the matching requirements of these programs.

If this is an idea that you think has some merit, I suggest that we arrange a time for us to get together to talk about it further.

We stand ready to help and support the counties in any way possible to ensure that these bridges are used and enjoyed by many generations to come. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Steven Engelhart
Executive Director

Cc: George Canon, Chair, Essex County Board of Supervisors
William Johnston, Essex County Planner
James Langley, Chair, Clinton County Board of Legislature
Assemblyman Chris Ortloff
Sen. Elizabeth Little
Lynn Garofalini, NYSOPRHP
Gerald Morrow, Supervisor, Town of Chesterfield
Sandy Senecal, Supervisor, Town of Ausable
Tim Bresette, Manager, Ausable Chasm
Scott Campbell Johnson, Friends of the North Country