

State of Alaska

March 8, 2016

Rich Thorne, councilmember
City of Bettles
Box 26023
Bettles Field, AK 99726

re: State Community Revenue Sharing Program

Dear Honorable Members of both houses of Congress and Governor Walker,

Please restore full funding to the State CRS program. The importance of this program to the City of Bettles and to the State economy cannot be overstated. Ninety-eight percent of the entire budget of the City of Bettles consists of CRS funding, and the cuts we face even next fiscal year are unacceptable. Without CRS, the City of Bettles simply goes away. We have no private land and very little base for other taxes. Would the disappearance of the City of Bettles be a problem? What is the State getting for its CRS funds spent in Bettles?

Bettles is an important cog in the Alaska aviation system – we are the transportation hub into Gates of the Arctic National Park and the only alternate landing field that sells aviation fuels between Deadhorse and Fairbanks, Kotzebue and Fort Yukon – a very large piece of real estate. “A place we count on,” my pilot friends tell me. CRS funds our local road maintenance, our fire department, and our ice road connection to the Dalton Highway.

The Bettles Ice Road consumes 50% of our budget currently. With no prospects of the State building an all-weather road to Bettles, our ice road is critical: the \$50,000 we spend each year on the ice road saves the communities of Bettles and Evansville (combined) \$600,000 in transportation costs (ice road compared to air transport). That's \$600K our community can't afford – the increase in costs of living and doing business would drive many of us out of the community. Lower transportation costs help keep us competitive in the worldwide tourist business – our tourist industry is worth more than \$12 million to the economy of Fairbanks, as all of our clients must travel through Fairbanks to get here. If Bettles wasn't here, would those clients go elsewhere in Alaska? Perhaps – but 2/3 of them are making Bettles their sole choice destination because of our superior weather for aurora viewing and because of the access our air taxis provide to hunting and hiking areas and river float trips. Those 2/3 of our clients wouldn't come to Alaska at all if Bettles wasn't available. Killing Bettles will have a major impact on Fairbanks. The Community Revenue Sharing program for the City of Bettles is a great investment in the State economy. Please restore full funding at FY2016 level to the State CRS program.

Thank you for considering us,

Rich Thorne