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January 29, 2016

Commissioner Don Garber
Major League Soccer
420 5th Avenue, 7th Fl.
New York, NY 10018

Commissioner Garber,

I was thrilled to receive your letter and share your excitement and commitment to bringing a professional soccer team to St. Louis, and look forward to working with you and a strong ownership group to make this vision a reality.

As a St. Louis native, you are familiar with our city's rich soccer history. It all began in the late 1800s, with European immigrants and parish leagues, which lasted well into the mid 20th century. As a result, St. Louis has always had an extremely active and competitive amateur soccer community. In 1950, when the U.S. beat England 1-0 at the World Cup, five of the 11 starters were St. Louisans. I was fortunate enough myself to have played on some of the best high-school and college teams in the nation in the early 70s; many of my teammates went on to play professionally. Today, this tradition continues through organized leagues – from St. Louis FC, a professional team in the United Soccer League, to St. Louis Pick Up Soccer, which offers games open to all comers every day of the year. It's not a coincidence that every team the United States has sent to the World Cup has included at least one St. Louisan.

Our passion for the beautiful game makes us a strong market. For example, in 2013 Manchester City and Chelsea came to the United States to play friendlies in St. Louis and New York, and wound up selling 10,000 more tickets in St. Louis – a dramatically smaller market than New York. St. Louisans came out in droves, filling Busch Stadium to capacity. Even more fans – 54,000 – turned out when Real Madrid and Inter Milan came to town later that same year. St. Louis fandom is too deep to be met by one-off matches – in 2015, St. Louis and Kansas City were the two strongest local TV markets throughout the Women's World Cup.

St. Louis is one of the strongest soccer markets in the United States and an excellent candidate for MLS expansion. I look forward to working together to bring the MLS to St. Louis.

Sincerely,

Francis G. Slay
Mayor , City of St. Louis