

May 11, 2022

Representative Michael Nelson
Representative Frank Hornstein
Representative Erin Koegel
Representative Mary Murphy
Representative Jim Nash

Senator Mary Kiffmeyer
Senator Scott Newman
Senator John Jasinski
Senator Jeff Howe
Senator Scott Dibble

Sent via electronic delivery

Dear House and Senate Conferees for HF 4293,

Thank you for your service on the conference committee for HF 4293, the State Government, Transportation and Veterans Omnibus Supplemental Budget Bill. We appreciate the hard work you will put in to negotiating a compromise that will build upon the strong transit and active transportation investments across the state of Minnesota that were made last year. We hope that we can provide helpful input on which proposals best position Minnesota for a prosperous present and future.

Now is the time to fund transit, and we appreciate the many investments included in the House language of HF 4293. This includes \$20 million for state matching dollars for federal Infrastructure Investments and Jobs Act (IIJA) grants; \$5 million for electric buses and infrastructure; \$500,000 for additional bus rapid transit (BRT) planning staff; \$2.3 million for a temporary reduction in transit fares; \$1.3 million for a suburban microtransit pilot program; and funding for transit signal prioritization program. As ridership numbers rebound and Minnesotans continue to feel more comfortable resuming their pre-COVID activities, it is critical that we act to rapidly improve our local bus service to ensure all Minnesotans have access to mobility. Given the size of the current budget surplus, any cuts to transit operating funds are unacceptable.

We also appreciate the increase in base funding for Safe Routes to School included in both the House and Senate language. This popular, bipartisan provision will ensure that many more Minnesota students will have safe access to bike, walk or roll to school, setting them up to be lifelong active transportation users. In that vein, we hope that a final compromise could include the House funding for statewide active transportation programming (\$12.5 million in FY 23, \$12.3 million in FY 24-25) to support safe and reliable options for Minnesotans who use biking, walking and rolling for transportation.

Thank you for the inclusion of funding for greater Minnesota transit. These dollars are critically needed for systems large and small as they continue to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. We hope that conferees can reach an agreement that guarantees greater Minnesota transit funding in future biennia, especially as it pertains to IIJA matching dollars.

We are also grateful for the inclusion of language to create a transit ambassador program and establish a civil penalty for fare non-payment in the House language. Given rising gas prices, we know that more Minnesotans will choose to use transit, and there is urgency to make efforts to make our transit system a safe and just place for all. We appreciate Senator Newman's expressions of

support and willingness to continue to advocate on this issue, and hope that a final compromise could include this provision.

We hope conferees will reconsider several prohibitions and restrictions included within the Senate language. We strongly oppose efforts to prohibit spending and planning for both the Rondo Reconnect project and the Northern Lights Express passenger rail project. These projects, which have strong community support, are innovative approaches to addressing two very different transportation problems. Further, we hope the conferees will opt to wait to see the results of the demand study that was included in last year's transportation budget bill before making any decisions on the future of Northstar Commuter Rail service. We also hope conferees will not include language restricting the use of transit guideways in any final agreement.

We stand ready to partner with you in advocating for a robust transportation agreement that's inclusive of transit and active transportation.

Sincerely,



Suzanne Sobotka
Policy and Research Director, Move Minnesota

Move Minnesota is the leading advocacy organization for expanding transit and active transportation access in our state. We are an active member and leader in the Transportation Forward Coalition, which brings together advocacy groups who seek to expand and improve our transportation system.

