



HENNEPIN COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
A-2400 GOVERNMENT CENTER  
MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA 55487-0240

May 9, 2022

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

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

Dear Members of the Omnibus State Government and Transportation Conference Committee:

I am writing on behalf of the Hennepin County Board of Commissioners to express our position on provisions in the House and Senate Omnibus State Government and Transportation Bills. We thank you for the opportunity to submit comments and greatly appreciate your work and leadership this session to advance funding for a multi-modal transportation system.

TRANSPORTATION ARTICLES

**Support Dedicated, Long Term Transit Funding via 40% of Auto-Parts Sales Tax Revenue**

Hennepin County has partnered with other counties to make significant investments to build and operate the metro's light rail, bus rapid transit, and commuter rail system. That system serves one-third of all transit rides in the metro, has secured over \$2.5 billion dollars in federal funds to our state, and supported thousands of well-paying construction jobs.

The region's transit system, however, remains inadequate. Additional state funding is needed to solve the Met Council's structural funding gap to operate and maintain the transit system and allow for transformational improvements in the bus system to better serve communities that have been historically subject to underinvestment of public resources. A strong transit system helps build wealth and advance inclusive prosperity across our state. Transit connects more people to better paying jobs, education, entertainment, and opportunities. Dedicated, long-term funding will deliver a more equitable, high-quality transit to the state and is a critical to confront our climate crisis and build a thriving economy to compete economically with our peer regions.

At a time of healthy state surplus, the state has sufficient resources to dedicate the sales taxes collected on auto-parts to fund transit needs. The last time the state made a dedicated, long-term investment in transit was in 2006, when voters overwhelming supported a constitutional amendment to send "not less than 40 percent" of the motor vehicle sales tax to transit. We must honor the commitment of Minnesota voters in 2006 and we support dedicating 40% of the auto-parts sales tax revenue to transit.

Additional state funding for the County State Aid Highway system is also needed to help maintain county roads and bridge systems. Hennepin County has the greatest need (\$1.28 billion) of all 87 counties and maintains the largest roadway system of any county in the state with 2,200 lane miles of roadway, 450 miles of bikeways, and 340 miles of sidewalks, 148 bridges, 792 traffic signals and more than 23,000 drainage structures/systems. Roughly one third of our transportation system is more than 50 years old. We urge the Legislature to work together to find a solution to our transportation funding gaps this session.

### **Federal IIJA Matching Funds**

The federal IIJA (Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act) provides a once-in-a-lifetime federal investment in our nation's infrastructure, and state and local governments need funding to best compete for additional federal funds. We appreciate that both the House and Senate include IIJA match funding for County roads to help meet the needs and demands on county transportation systems.

We also support the matching funds in the House to support our transit systems, electric buses, the installation of electric vehicle charging infrastructure, multimodal transportation, and maximize federal transportation funding to combat climate change. Vehicle transportation is the largest source of greenhouse gas emissions in Minnesota and despite more fuel-efficient vehicles we have made little progress over the last two decades to reduce emissions. Climate change and transportation pollution more acutely affect our most vulnerable residents. Data show that communities of color, low-income families, and residents with disabilities are the most impacted by negative climate impacts, like flooding events, heat waves, and poor air quality. Many of these communities are surrounded and bisected by the highest volume roadways and suffer disproportionately from vehicle pollution.

### **Active Transportation and Safe Routes to Schools**

We support the funding included for the Active Transportation program in the House bill and Safe Routes to Schools in the House and Senate bills. These programs improve safety on our transportation system by reducing fatalities and serious injuries from vehicle crashes and increasing access for all users by investing in ADA, walking, biking, and rolling improvements.

### **Suspension of Guideway Activities: Senate Article 11, Sec. 15**

We oppose suspending all work on guideways. Delaying these projects, like the Blue Line Extension, is harmful and disrespectful to the communities along these corridors who have been waiting for too long to receive the enhanced transit service they have been promised. Delay would disrupt thousands of Minnesotans who are working today. Federal IIJA funding provides once-in-a-lifetime federal investment in our nation's infrastructure, including doubling the highly competitive federal program that funds large public transit construction. If our guideway projects are delayed, we will miss out on billions of dollars in federal funding. That federal funding and associated construction jobs should come to Minnesota but will instead go to the peer metro regions currently building out light rail and Dedicated Bus Rapid Transit projects like Austin, Memphis, and Salt Lake City.

### **County Responsibility for Guideways: Senate Article 11, Sec. 9**

We oppose the guideway proposal that would undo the longstanding partnership between counties and the Met Council that has allowed our region's transit system to make transformative improvements. The proposal will remove local control of locally raised tax dollars. Counties would lose fiscal oversight and leverage to negotiate costs with the Met Council, and instead, county resources would serve as a blank check for the Met Council's wants and needs. The lack of control over local tax dollars would also inhibit our ability to continue to expand and improve the system that currently serves over one-third of all metro transit riders.

### **Transit Signal Priority System Planning: House Article 13, Section 58**

We support the working group for planning and coordination on transit signal priority systems and dedicated bus lanes to determine transit service improvements on some of the bus routes with the highest ridership on the Metro Transit system.

### **Corridors of Commerce: House Article 13, Sec. 9-13 / Senate Article 10 Sec. 2-7**

We support the House position which is better suited to the needs of local governments and we appreciate openness of the conferees to ways to improve the language going forward.

### INDEPENDENT EXPERT REVIEW ARTICLE: House Article 14 / Senate Article 8

#### **Deputy Registrar Fee Increases**

We appreciate that both the House and Senate bills include the recommendations of the Driver and Vehicle Services Independent Expert Review ("King Report"). We support the increase in driver's license application and renewal transaction fees and the sharing of mail in and online renewal fees between DVS and full-service deputy registrars. These measures will help deputy registrar offices and service centers be more financially self-sufficient and will reduce property tax subsidies of these operations. If the deadline for renewing a driver's license is extended from the current four years to eight years as proposed in the Senate bill, we encourage a commensurate increase in transaction fees to account for the reduction in the number of renewals that will result.

#### **MNDRIVE Employee Disciplinary Procedures**

Both the House and Senate bills include provisions related to disciplinary procedures for employees who access MNDRIVE data. We support the creation of an appeal process for employees threatened with permanent loss of access to MNDRIVE data and a prohibition on DVS permanently revoking access in cases of properly accessing data to complete a transaction or resolve an issue.

### STATE GOVERNMENT ARTICLES

#### **Public Land Survey Monument Restoration: Senate Article 5, Sec. 62**

We support language in the Senate bill that requires the state chief geospatial information officer to submit a report to the legislature on the status of the public land survey system (PLSS) and work needed to update property boundary monuments. The need for updating the PLSS is well known and documented, and we are disappointed that funding for this important issue is not

included in either bill. However, the creation of this report will bring added attention to the need for future funding for this endeavor.

We greatly appreciate your efforts this session and your work ahead to negotiate a compromise. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Marion Greene". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Marion Greene, Chair  
Hennepin County Board of Commissioners