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Honorable Transportation Finance and Policy Committee
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
Saint Paul, MN 55155

February 25, 2021

RE: Support for HF646 (Lee)

Dear Committee Members,

Fresh Energy is an independent, non-partisan nonprofit that has been providing policy research and analysis on energy issues across Minnesota for over 25 years. Our mission is to shape and drive bold policy solutions to achieve equitable carbon-neutral economies. We write today in support of HF646, which, utilizing air quality data, will strategically deploy Metro Transit's cleanest buses to areas in the seven-county metro area that are most burdened by air pollution.

Nationally and in Minnesota, transportation is the highest emitting sector of greenhouse gas. The combustion of transportation fuels is also a major source of pollutants that harm our hearts and lungs and lower life expectancy. Communities of color and under-resourced communities bear the brunt of these negative health impacts given their proximity and prolonged exposure to roadways and heavy industry. The disparate impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on Black and Indigenous communities and those of color has brought into stark contrast the harmful, overlapping systemic impacts these communities face – including exposure to air pollution. HF646 provides an important step towards correcting past wrongs, ensuring the benefits of the transition to a clean energy economy are shared by all Minnesotans.

In the past, Metro Transit has made public commitments to electrifying its robust bus fleet. Working with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency to strategically decide where to deploy their cleanest buses based on data and science will provide critical expertise to help Metro Transit understand their role and opportunity to improve public health.

Too often throughout history, under-resourced communities and communities of color have been left behind in times of transformational change. As Minnesota works to rapidly decarbonize the energy sector, economy, and mitigate the impacts of climate change, we have not just an opportunity but an obligation to learn from past transitions, where certain policy choices have excluded at best, and have actively harmed at worst. Policies like HF646 provide one important step toward correcting harmful past policy decisions and other systemic barriers that disproportionately harm Minnesota's most vulnerable and marginalized communities.

Sincerely,

Anna Johnson
Senior Policy and Public Affairs Associate
Fresh Energy