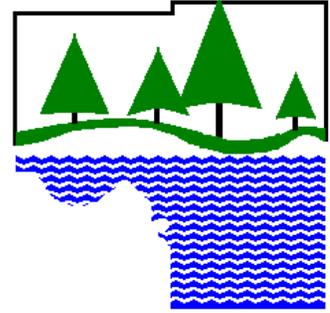


ITASCA COUNTY

Courthouse
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123 NE 4th Street
Grand Rapids, MN 55744-2600
Office (218) 327-7363 Fax (218) 327-2848



May 7, 2022

Rep. Michael Nelson
585 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Senator Mary Kiffmeyer
95 University Avenue W.
Minnesota Senate Bldg., Room 3103
St. Paul, MN 55155

Re: HF 4293 - Support for the Cross Range Expressway Project

Chair Nelson, Chair Kiffmeyer, and conferees to House File 4293:

This letter is submitted in support of the inclusion of the Highway 169 Cross-Range Expressway project between Taconite and Pengilly in the Senate's version of HF 4293, the Omnibus State Government and Transportation bill. We thank Senator Tomassoni and Representative Sanstede for introducing this legislation as SF 3839/HF 4173, and thank Senator Newman for including the project in the Senate's Omnibus Transportation bill.

This legislation would finally complete the two-to-four lane expansion of Highway 169 through the Iron Range. This project has seen gradual progress through the decades, but eight miles of dangerous two-lane highway still remain, with no funding identified for completion.

This project is crucial for the economic prosperity of our region. A safe, efficient Highway 169 from Grand Rapids to Hibbing and beyond would better enable the movement of people and goods, creating economic opportunity for Northern Minnesota. This portion of the highway is also an important tourist corridor.

The dollars appropriated in last year's transportation bill for planning work were a good start, but it's time to finish the job. Additional funding would allow for the completion of planning, design, engineering, environmental, and construction work to finally see the project through.

The County does appreciate the efforts in both the House and Senate Transportation bills to improve the Corridors of Commerce program, which we believe was originally intended to support the long-awaited completion of projects like Highway 169. If full funding for the project is not secured in your final transportation bill, we will certainly continue to seek funding through opportunities like Corridors of Commerce, but this project is too urgent for us to wait any longer. We urge you to help us make progress this year, in this bill.

In closing, please include the Senate's position on the Highway 169 project in your conference committee report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Leo Trunt". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Leo Trunt
Commissioner, District #3

Equal Opportunity Employer