

February 22, 2022

Commissioner Margaret Anderson Kelliher
Minnesota Department of Transportation
395 John Ireland Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55155

Sent via email to: MnDOT_Commissioner@state.mn.us

Dear Commissioner Anderson Kelliher:

The undersigned presidents of private nonprofit colleges and universities in Minnesota respectfully urge your support for implementation of the 2015 (Draft) Minnesota Statewide Rail Plan.

State implementation of the combined statewide network would reintroduce regional passenger rail service to all private colleges in the MPCC, provide a safe and affordable regional public transit connection between our campuses and the largest urban centers of our State and Upper Midwest Region, and open the way for improved inter-state passenger rail connections to the National Passenger Rail (Amtrak) network. Train service on the network envisioned in the Statewide Rail Plan would expand affordable transportation options for students and thereby expand the range of higher education options open to them. With a development process that addresses environmental concerns, we strongly urge the state to take the steps necessary to make the plan a reality.

Congress has now appropriated \$67 billion for regional passenger rail development through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA). Your leadership now in championing Minnesota's Rail Plan will position our state to compete successfully for the federal funds now available for its implementation. Minnesota's Rail Plan exactly aligns with all three prioritized funding selection criteria identified by the Biden Administration for IIJA funds: equity, economic development, and environment/climate action. Implementation of it would widen access to Minnesota's private and public post-secondary institutions (equity), re-connect regions that are currently unserved by regional transit options (equity and economic development), and shift regional travel demand from roads to rails (climate action).

We would be most grateful for your support.

Sincerely,



Rebecca Bergman
Chair, Minnesota Private College Council
President, Gustavus Adolphus College



Paul Cerkvenik
President
Minnesota Private College Council

Minnesota Private Colleges | Excellence within reach

Augsburg University
Bethany Lutheran College
Bethel University
Carleton College
College of Saint Benedict
The College of St. Scholastica

Concordia College, Moorhead
Concordia University, St. Paul
Gustavus Adolphus College
Hamline University
Macalester College
Minneapolis College of Art and Design

Saint John's University
Saint Mary's University of Minnesota
St. Catherine University
St. Olaf College
University of St. Thomas

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James Mullen
Saint John's University



David R. Anderson
St. Olaf College



Gene Pfeifer
Bethany Lutheran College



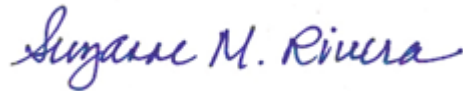
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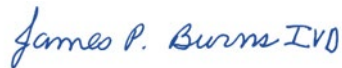
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ReBecca Koenig Roloff
St. Catherine University



James Burns, IVD
Saint Mary's University of Minnesota

cc: Nancy Daubenberger, Deputy Commissioner and Chief Engineer
Katie Hatt, Rail Director