

The Honorable Rep. Frank Hornstein  
100 Rev Dr Martin Luther King Jr Blvd  
563 State Office Building  
St. Paul, MN 55155

March 18, 2024

Chair Hornstein and members of the Transportation Finance and Policy Committee,

Experts and stakeholders across the energy, environmental, and public sectors have clearly identified that expanding our electric transmission infrastructure is one of, if not the most important actions we need to take to achieve renewable energy generation growth and power grid reliability enhancements to successfully transition to a clean and prosperous carbon-neutral economy.

The NextGen Highways Coalition is a national movement, now with its first state-level coalition represented by the signers of this letter. Formed by diverse interests committed to knocking down barriers and opening up pathways to accelerate the critical transmission infrastructure sought by so many parties, the breadth of our coalition demonstrates the consensus that addressing the issues that make transmission development so difficult must be a top priority of our public officials.

Minnesota has a tremendous foundation for leading the country in this area, and this committee can set the tone by endorsing the legislation before it today. HF 3900 is supported by environmental groups, utilities, renewable energy developers, and labor who view it as a simple and common-sense first step to address a central cause slowing down transmission development in Minnesota – deciding where to put the infrastructure and securing the land rights and permits to put it there.

Many proposed transmission projects take years of time and financial investment to first plan a route that meets engineering standards and then negotiate with hundreds of individual landowners and community stakeholders for the rights to utilize that route. This comes at the expense of a speedy project timeline and often runs up against social resistance around impacts to other important land uses or simply folks who don't want a 150-ft. transmission tower dropped into their once un-impeded vista.

HF 3900 provides an option preferred by the vast majority of Minnesotans to solve these issues: ensuring all public rights-of-way (ROW) along interstates and highways are open to co-location of high-voltage transmission infrastructure. The state regulations currently prohibiting this option in interstate ROWs are based on both old federal guidance (since rescinded) and state statutes that have nothing to do with the technical, economic, or social feasibility of constructing high-voltage transmission lines in interstate ROWs. Recent public opinion research showed nearly 80% of Minnesotans would prefer the co-location of transmission lines and public ROWs to other alternatives.

Minnesota NextGen Highways continues to engage stakeholders, including utilities and MnDOT, on common-sense solutions to help realize our shared goal of considering the co-location of transmission infrastructure in highway and Interstate rights-of-way when and where it makes sense.

The urgency is real. Minnesota committed to 100% carbon-free electricity by 2040 – 16 years from now. In the world of transmission planning which happens in 10-year cycles, that's barely a blink of an eye. The calculus is simple:

- The state requires a dramatic expansion of renewable energy development to meet its clean power goals.
- Rapidly expanding transmission infrastructure is essential to achieving that development.
- This bill is a simple, effective, and highly popular solution for creating more options to build transmission faster.

Thank you for your consideration of this important legislation for Minnesota’s energy, economic and environmental future.

Sincerely,

Randy Satterfield  
Executive Director  
NextGen Highways Coalition

*Co-signers*



**Fresh Energy**

Rachel Wiedewitsch  
*Senior Policy Associate, Clean Electricity*



Kayla Christensen  
*Executive Director*



Aurora Vautrin  
*Political Director*



Lindsay J. Brice  
*Policy Director*



Citizens' Climate Lobby  
Minnesota

*P Greg Jason*  
*CCL MN Statewide Team Leader*



Madelyn Smerillo  
*Regional Policy Manager*



CENTER for  
RURAL AFFAIRS

Cora Hoffer  
*Clean Energy Policy Associate*



clean energy  
economy mn

George Damian  
*Director of Government Affairs*



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Chair Frank Hornstein  
House Transportation Finance and Policy Committee  
State Office Building  
100 Rev Dr Martin Luther King Jr Blvd  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Chair Hornstein and Committee Members,

My name is Kayla Christensen, and I am the Executive Director of the Minnesota Conservative Energy Forum (MnCEF), a non-profit education and advocacy organization that promotes an “all-of-the-above” energy strategy for Minnesota. We encourage policymakers to embrace innovations in clean and affordable energy based on our conservative principles such as economic growth, property rights, personal stewardship, job growth, and national security. I am writing to you today to share MnCEF’s support for Rep. Kraft’s bill, House File 3900, as amended.

As more projects are built and new innovations in energy come to market, and especially with the legislature’s 100% carbon-free by 2040 mandate, Minnesota will need to significantly increase its transmission capacity. This poses a significant challenge because it is much more difficult to secure land agreements for transmission lines compared to renewable projects, as landowners typically only get a one-time payment for transmission. This legislation would help alleviate much of the heartburn around these projects.

MnCEF’s field program, the Minnesota Land & Liberty Coalition, serves as a resource and provides education across the state to the public and local policymakers, often in areas where utility-scale renewable projects are being proposed, enabling us to hear directly from the people most affected by these projects. While some are opposed to the actual wind turbines or solar panels, if a project has a transmission line included, that is what we often hear the most questions and concerns about. The leading questions are: 1) Why can't you bury the lines? and 2) Why can't you put them along the roads where there’s already this kind of infrastructure?

The answer to the first question, as you may know, is it is extremely expensive to bury high voltage transmission lines, and they are much more difficult to repair. The answer to the second question, however, is one we have been seeking for a number of years. Landowners are often aware of our transmission needs, but see the land along transportation corridors already developed to serve the public not being utilized for co-location, instead seeing developers seeking private land by agreement, or, in some cases with utilities, using eminent domain to site transmission.

Earlier this month, MISO released its preliminary plans for Tranche 2 of its Long Range Transmission Planning – this project would be a great candidate to take advantage of this policy. Landowners along these new routes can have confidence that the state will not be buying unnecessary land or fear use of eminent domain. Utilities will have a process by which they can seek co-location, where prudent, in transportation corridors.

This legislation provides the opportunity to maximize utilization of existing resources, prioritize expediency, minimize costs of acquiring land, and protect private property rights, while still ensuring the highest standards of safety. This bill isn’t something only industry groups support; we hear from your constituents

on a weekly basis asking why transmission lines can't be placed along interstate corridors. This is creating another tool to use during project planning, giving the PUC, utilities, developers, and communities flexibility, allowing them to better coordinate and work around potential impacts to communities and landowners.

We urge you to support HF 3900, as amended. Thank you for your consideration, and we look forward to continuing to work toward a cleaner and more reliable energy grid.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kayla Christensen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "K" and a long, sweeping tail.

Kayla Christensen  
Executive Director  
Minnesota Conservative Energy Forum