

St. Louis & Lake Counties
REGIONAL RAILROAD AUTHORITY



December 1, 2017

Governor Mark Dayton
Office of Governor Mark Dayton and Lt. Governor Tina Smith
130 State Capitol
75 Reverend Drive
Martin Luther King Boulevard
St. Paul, MN 55155-1800

Commissioner Charles A. Zelle
Minnesota Department of Transportation
395 John Ireland Boulevard
St. Paul, MN 55155-1800

Dear Governor and Commissioner:

Thank you for the careful thought you're putting into the development of the 2018 bonding proposal. We encourage you to consider passenger rail, and in particular the Northern Lights Express (NLX) passenger rail project between Minneapolis and Duluth.

If NLX receives \$6 million in the next bonding bill, it will make us eligible to receive \$24 million in federal funds to complete the project design engineering. NLX is eligible to receive 80% Federal Railroad Administration funding, compared to 50% or less for Federal Transit Administration's funding of other transit modes.

NLX has advanced to near the end of the Federal Railroad Administration vetting process. The project is waiting for final confirmation of its environmental work; a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) is expected in December 2017.

The next stage is final design and construction. Bonding dollars requested would complete the final design along the 152 miles of existing BNSF Railway track with stations in Minneapolis, Coon Rapids, Cambridge, Hinckley, Superior Wisc., and Duluth, with a possible layover facility in Sandstone.

When constructed, NLX will improve the state's transportation system, build a stronger economy and create jobs. Based on preliminary return on investment analysis, there will be a positive return on investment to the state and local communities. For example, tourism revenues alone will raise \$404 million, which will support 9,300 jobs per year and wages of about \$249 million over a 40-year period.

For our area, we welcome ways to connect employers and employees. We encourage multi-modal planning that addresses the needs of students, seniors and tourists too.

The Minnesota Department of Transportation (Mn DOT) commissioner's appointed State Passenger Rail Forum is supporting a bonding request of \$11 million for the Mn DOT Passenger Rail Office. Of that, we would like to see \$6 million invested in NLX so that \$24 million in federal dollars can be brought to Minnesota.

In addition, the St. Louis and Lake Counties Regional Railroad Authority, working in coordination with the MN DOT passenger Rail Office, has submitted a TIGER grant application to begin constructing safety improvements along the NLX railroad corridor by upgrading 14 railroad crossings. The crossings improvements will provide immediate benefit to the public and forthcoming needs of the NLX project. Congressman Rick Nolan, Senator Amy Klobuchar, and Senator Al Franken vigorously support NLX and its TIGER application. Federal funding through this program will improve safety for our citizens and a crucial first step in NLX construction between Duluth and Minneapolis.

Thank you for considering passenger rail and NLX for inclusion in the 2018 bonding proposal and your support for TIGER funding.

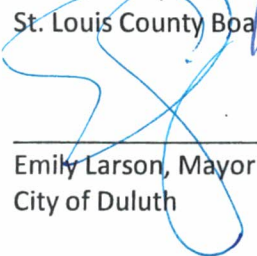
Sincerely,



Rick Goutermont, Chair
St. Louis and Lake Counties Regional Railroad Authority



Frank Jewell, Chair
St. Louis County Board of Commissioners



Emily Larson, Mayor
City of Duluth

cc: Tina Smith, MN Lt. Governor
Rick Nolan, US Representative
Amy Klobuchar, US Senator
Al Franken, US Senator
Tenzin Dolkar, MN State Rail Director

Similar letters sent by:

Anoka Area Chamber of Commerce
City of Cambridge
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Minneapolis-Duluth/Superior Passenger Rail Alliance
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