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Minnesota Legislative Board

The Honorable Timothy Walz
Governor, State of Minnesota
130 State Capitol
St. Paul, MN 55155

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

November 17, 2021

Dear Governor Walz and Commissioner Anderson Kelliher,

On behalf of SMART-TD (Sheet Metal, Air, Rail, and Transportation Union-Transportation Division) representing Railroad Conductors, Engineers, and Yardmasters working in Minnesota, I'm writing in support of the Northern Lights Express passenger rail initiative.

The tremendous amount of work done by many groups and individuals over the last 20 years to advance this plan is paying off. NLX is a ready-to-go project at a time when our nation is embracing public transportation by train.

Northern Lights Express will carry children from northern Minnesota to the robust network of children's hospitals in the Twin Cities Metro without fear of bad weather or animal strikes on the I-35 corridor. This project will connect veterans to the VA, students will be able to commute to and from school on a more regular basis, and sports fans can get to the stadiums. Duluth is the gateway to the beautiful arrowhead region of our great state and NLX is the connection for our Minnesotans looking to get out of the metro and enjoy our natural wonders.

In the past month, I have personally ridden the Blue Line in Chicago, The South Shore Line from Chicago to Michigan City, and AMTRAK's Wolverine to Detroit. Experiencing established routes first hand has strengthened my excitement for passenger rail service. Seeing the diversity of commuters on these trains illustrated to me NLX is truly for all Minnesotans.

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The passage of the Infrastructure and Jobs Act of 2021 included 16 billion dollars that Minnesota can get a piece of, if we act swiftly and decisively. While NLX is the only project on a list of 28 that is ready to go, there will be competition. We urge you to prioritize Northern Lights Express in the next legislative session and seize the opportunity before us to connect our Minnesota cities via passenger rail.

The working men and women of SMART-TD stand ready. We will be proud to crew and staff the trains operating as Northern Lights Express.

Thank you for making time to consider our position. We ask that you reach out to us with any questions you may have.

Respectfully,

Nicholas Katich
MN Legislative Director
SMART-TD