



## News Release

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For Immediate Release

Contact: Jill Brown  
Cell: 612-889-2611  
Email: NLXrail@gmail.com

### NLX Corridor Leaders Celebrate Project Milestone

About 80 community leaders from the Northern Lights Express passenger rail corridor, between the Twin Cities and the Twin Ports, got a project update March 26 at the Historic Union Depot in Duluth. Meeting hosts were Duluth Mayor Emily Larson and Duluth City Council President and NLX Alliance Chair Elissa Hansen. Other presenters included Minnesota Department of Transportation Commissioner Charlie Zelle, Amtrak Governmental Affairs Senior Officer Derrick James, and Minneapolis City Council Member Andrew Johnson.

"It's amazing that we've come to a Tier 2 finding of no significant impact," Zelle said. "Most communities don't get this far."

The Federal Railroad Administration and the Minnesota Department of Transportation announced the finding of no significant impact earlier in March. The FONSI signals the completion of the study phases. NLX is now eligible to apply for federal funds to cover 80 percent of the \$550 to \$600 million project.

Zelle said some may wonder if the mobility of the future, with its driverless cars, will still need transit.

"Absolutely, we will need transit," Zelle said. "We will see a lot less single occupancy cars."

James, from the Chicago Amtrak office, said there's a renaissance happening for passenger rail.

"The global economy of today demands that regions be connected commercially, digitally, physically," James said. "The planned return of passenger rail service between the Twin Cities and the Twin Ports is not just about a train. It's about connections."

"NLX is not just connecting two major regions," Minneapolis Council Member Johnson said. "It's about all the economic development activity that happens in between and the people who are touched by it."

Next steps for the project are for the Minnesota Department of Transportation to finish negotiations with BNSF Railway, the owner of the tracks, and Amtrak, the operator of the service. The NLX Alliance and its partners will look for funding opportunities.

"Securing funding will take significant outreach from the Alliance, our partners and residents," said NLX Alliance Chair Hansen.

#### **Minneapolis-Duluth/Superior Passenger Rail Alliance**

Administrative Agency: St. Louis & Lake Counties Regional Railroad Authority  
Executive Director: Bob Manzoline, 111 Station 44 Road, Eveleth, MN 55734  
Phone: (218) 744-1388 \* Toll free: (877) 637-2241



To encourage more people to engage with the project, the NLX Alliance has enlisted Polco for online polling. Hansen welcomes residents to set up a free account and weigh in on questions posed by the NLX Alliance about the proposed train service. Go to [Polco.us/NLXtrain](http://Polco.us/NLXtrain).

Mayor Larson thanked people for their years of work to get the project through the study phases and to the threshold of being constructed.

“We have more work to do, and it’s time to get it done,” Larson said.

### **About the NLX Alliance**

The Minneapolis-Duluth/Superior Passenger Rail Alliance (NLX Alliance) was formed in 2007 to pursue the return of rail service to the corridor. Today, the NLX Alliance represents cities, counties, the Band of Ojibwe, and interested groups along 152 miles of existing BNSF Railway track. The NLX Alliance works with the Minnesota Department of Transportation, the project lead, to advocate for a data-driven process that will deliver fast, safe and efficient service between Minneapolis and Duluth with stops in Coon Rapids, Cambridge, Hinckley, and Superior. Learn more at [NorthernLightsExpress.org](http://NorthernLightsExpress.org).

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**Cutline:** There’s optimism for getting NLX passenger rail across the finish line, now that the studies are complete. That was a common thread among speakers March 26 at the Historic Union Depot in Duluth. Presenters were Minneapolis City Council Member Andrew Johnson, Duluth Mayor Emily Larson, Minnesota Department of Transportation Commissioner Charlie Zelle, Duluth City Council President and NLX Alliance chair Elissa Hansen, MnDOT NLX Project Manager Frank Loetterle, and Amtrak Governmental Affairs Senior Officer Derrick James.

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