



April 26, 2016

Dear Editor:

Midwestern college students have spoken. Intercity passenger rail is a critical resource. Here in Minnesota, supporters of the proposed Northern Lights Express (NLX) passenger rail project agree wholeheartedly.

Almost 19,200 respondents across nine Midwestern states participated in a survey by the Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission (MIPRC). The results released in mid-April show:

- More than half (56 percent) say they would be more likely to take the train if more frequent service was available.
- About 23 percent have taken the train to/from school.
- For those who have taken Amtrak service to/from school, 65 percent indicate it's an important resource for them to be able to attend school.
- Reasons for taking the train include more convenient and comfortable than driving (57 percent) and cheaper than other transportation modes (49 percent).

The route for NLX will connect several higher education hubs with stations in downtown Minneapolis, Coon Rapids, Cambridge, Hinckley, Superior, and Duluth. In fact, 46 percent of University of Minnesota Duluth students come from the Twin Cities area.

Helping education thrive is just one benefit of NLX. That and other benefits far outweigh the roughly \$500 million needed to get service launched. Construction jobs (3,100), increased property values (\$136 million), tourism boost (\$378 million and tourism-related wages of \$233 million), environmental sustainability (\$47 million), reduced highway fatalities and crashes (\$165 million), tax revenue (\$355 million), and more are predicted over the first 40 years.

This legislative session, Minnesota has the opportunity to leverage \$20 million in federal dollars for NLX by approving \$4 million in state funds. Please join me in encouraging our legislators to invest in education and our state's infrastructure by supporting NLX passenger rail.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Steve Raukar'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name 'Steve' being particularly prominent.

Steve Raukar, St. Louis County Commissioner

Chair, NLX Alliance Steve Raukar

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