

June 22, 2021

Representative Frank Hornstein
545 State Office Building
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Senator Scott Newman
3105 Minnesota Senate Building
95 University Ave. W.
Saint Paul, MN 55155

(Sent via electronic delivery)

Dear Representative Hornstein and Senator Newman,

Thank you for your ongoing efforts on the transportation finance omnibus bill. We realize the challenging situation you found yourselves in, and are grateful for the significant one-time investments you have made in transit and active transportation. This truly demonstrates your commitment to ensuring that all Minnesotans have access to a safe, reliable and just transportation system. While the bill does not contain any new revenues for ongoing funding for transit and active transportation, it will be a good start to building out our transit systems to meet Minnesotans' needs—especially when combined with received and proposed federal funds.

We are particularly pleased to see the following items in the final transportation budget bill:

- \$57.5 million invested in arterial bus rapid transit. This is a historic cash investment in our bus system that will drastically improve the connectivity and reliability of our transit system, and will shave hours off Minnesotans' weekly commutes and transit trips.
- \$5 million invested in the active transportation account at MnDOT. This is the first time this account has received funding, and help improve biking, walking and rolling modes of transportation statewide.
- \$250,000 to assist with Metro Transit's transition to zero emission buses, which will be deployed in areas that already face disproportionate negative effects from air pollution.
- \$5 million for Safe Routes to School, which will enhance active transportation choices for students statewide, setting them up for continuing to opt for active modes throughout their lives.
- \$250,000 for the Highway 55 transit corridor study.
- \$10 million for the state match for the second daily train to Chicago, which expands Minnesotans' choices for multimodal transportation.
- Forecasted funding for Metro Mobility services beginning in fiscal year 2026, which will ensure this essential federally mandated service maintains adequate funding.

We were disappointed to see that language creating administrative citation penalties for fare non-payment, and creating a transit ambassador program was not included in the final bill. We will look forward to working with you in the next legislative session to remove the misdemeanor penalty for fare non-payment altogether. Doing so is needed to fully decriminalize fare non-payment and to allow for fair, consistent use of the administrative citation. We also hope we can fully fund a permanent transit ambassador program in the coming years. Having a steady, helpful presence on transit will go a long way to making Minnesotans feel safe using transit, and can help connect riders to needed resources.

Ultimately, we stand ready to continue to work with you to build on these historic investments. Without any guarantees of future revenue, operating pressures will continue to build on our transit system, and we will continue to fall behind other metropolitan areas around the country. Our peer cities are innovating and investing in equitable and sustainable transportation—in a free fare pilot on the Los Angeles metro, additional bus lanes in Boston, street reclamations in New York, and renovations to nearly all the commuter train stations in Chicago, to name a few. At the start of the 2021 session, Move Minnesota proposed a legislative platform to accelerate the buildout of over twenty bus rapid transit lines, increase service frequency for well-trafficked routes in the metro, expand service for suburban providers, and a free fares program. We will continue to advocate for these enhancements that will help achieve the state's goals for mitigating climate change, advancing social and racial justice and providing economic opportunities for all Minnesotans.

Sincerely,



Suzanne Sobotka
Policy and Research Director

Cc: Margaret Anderson Kelliher, Commissioner, Minnesota Department of Transportation
Charles Zelle, Chair, Metropolitan Council
Hue Nguyen, Deputy Chief of Staff for Policy and Legislative Affairs, Governor's Office
Alexis Donath, Policy Advisor, Governor's Office
Judd Schetnan, Director of Government Affairs, Metropolitan Council
Erik Rudeen, Assistant Commissioner for Government Affairs, MnDOT