

Dear Conference Committee Members,

Thank you for your work on such an important bill. It's about time that public transit gets the funding it deserves, considering how many people rely on it. Metro Transit ridership has been slowly rebounding, but more needs to be done to make riding better. One key aspect of this is funding; the metro area sales tax will provide much needed money to improve service. I support the House's 0.75% sales tax over the Senate's 0.5% sales tax. Our fleet is aging, we need to care better for our transit operators, and our stations need maintenance - just to name a few existing problems. We also need funding to build new routes: necessary for the ever increasing carbon emissions from cars.

My next concern is with the restructuring of the Metropolitan Council. We can all agree that things need to change; they've needed to change for a long time but now is the time something needs to be done. The Senate's version of the bill designates a charter commission to be appointed by a Ramsey County judge who "have expertise in regional governance and the law to serve as members of the charter commission." I believe that members of whatever commission is decided on should be similar to those designated in the House's version of the bill: people with stake in the outcome such as transit advocates, employees of the Metropolitan Council/Metro Transit, county commissioners, etc.

One element that was removed from the Senate version was the \$0.75 delivery fee. I believe this should be added back into the final version of the bill because funding for our roads is only going to get lower and lower as time goes on. The delivery fee is a consistent source of funding at a time when raising the gas tax is not a viable option.

Lastly, I would like to address the difference in funding for the Northern Lights Express (NLX) train from Minneapolis to Duluth. The House's version allocates far more funding towards this hugely beneficial infrastructure project, and I believe the final bill should match the House funding. The benefits of this line are numerous: it will reduce congestion on I-35, bring more business along the corridor, and will serve as a first step to reducing our carbon emissions per person for travel. My only comment which does not seem to be covered in either bill (and if this is not germane, I apologize) is allocation of funding for transit options to the state parks on the north shore. For context, these were the figures for 3 state parks 20 miles apart on the north shore in 2021: Gooseberry Falls - 782,125 visitors, Tettegouche - 564,992 visitors, Split Rock Lighthouse - 544,327 visitors. These parks have huge parking lots that often overflow during the summer. To me, it's a no brainer to have buses that run along MN 61 going between state parks, Two Harbors, and Duluth! This would allow anyone to visit the beautiful north shore, regardless if they can drive a car. It would also eliminate the hassle of looking for parking every time you go on a busy day.

I hope you take my thoughts into consideration.

Thank you,
Owen Young, St. Louis Park resident