

Date: April 5, 2022

To: Minnesota House of Representatives, Transportation Finance & Policy
Re: Testimony in support of: HF4300 HIGHWAYS FOR HABITAT PROGRAM
ESTABLISHMENT (Omnibus HF1683)

Committee Members:

We live in Excelsior but still own the family in western Minnesota. We often drive to the farm on highway 7 and, over the last 20 years, have witnessed drastic landscape changes due to intensified agricultural and short-sighted roadside practices.

At one time it was common to see meadowlarks, pheasants and other wildlife on the drive – not any more. Throughout the seasons, Minnesota roadsides lack wildlife habitat and visual appeal. Without much exaggeration it would be possible to play roadside golf from the western Twin cities all the way to South Dakota.

Minnesota is an outlier in how roadsides are maintained. For example, nearby states, like Missouri, South Dakota and Iowa, reduce blowing snow by planting and maintaining wildlife habitat. Minnesota doesn't and that needs to change.

Along with the snow, soil blows from nearby farm fields accumulates in ditches and with the first heavy rain washes into waterways. Permanent vegetation buffers protects water quality by filtering runoff, improves highway safety by reducing drifting snow and resulting glaze while providing critical wildlife habitat.

The "Highways for Habitat Program" is a win for all Minnesotan's. We strongly urge and expect your support.

Thank you,

Patty and Greg Larson
25535 Orchard Circle
Excelsior, MN
612 325-7308