



February 21<sup>st</sup>, 2023

TO: Transportation Finance and Policy Committee

FROM: Andrea Lovoll, Legislative Director, Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy

RE: HF 409 (Koegel)

Chair Hornstein and Members of the Committee:

The Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy (MCEA) supports HF 409 (Koegel) for the Northern Lights Express (NLX). This bill would provide funding for a Minneapolis/Duluth inter-city passenger rail for design, engineering, environmental analysis and mitigation, land acquisition and right-of-way, and construction.

The NLX would raise the quality of life for people living in the Twin Cities, Duluth, and all the cities in between who do not currently have adequate access to transportation. It would make it easier for those who cannot or prefer not to drive to get where they need to go, safely and conveniently. It would reduce the climate impact of daily commutes and trips between the connected cities, as trains are a much more efficient way to travel in terms of greenhouse gas emissions compared to personal vehicles.

The climate benefit of train travel is highly relevant to a discussion frequently heard this legislative session about metals for electrification of the transportation sector – in particular, concerns over supply of minerals for electric vehicle (EV) batteries. HF 409 is one step towards building a robust public transportation system in Minnesota, which would enable families and individuals to reduce their dependence on cars, thereby reducing demand for and consumption of EV-relevant minerals.

Because HF 409 would increase the mineral efficiency of transportation decarbonization, the legislation also has environmental justice implications for communities that would be impacted by mining for energy-relevant minerals.<sup>1</sup> In the US, a vast majority of energy-relevant metal resources are found within 35 miles of Native American reservations – 97% for nickel, 87% for copper, 79% for lithium, and 68% of cobalt.<sup>2</sup> Considering the metal mining sector is the leading

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<sup>1</sup> Riofrancas, T., et. al. January 2023. “Achieving Zero Emissions with More Mobility and Less Mining. University of California – Davis.

[https://www.climateandcommunity.org/files/ugd/d6378b\\_3b79520a747948618034a2b19b9481a0.pdf](https://www.climateandcommunity.org/files/ugd/d6378b_3b79520a747948618034a2b19b9481a0.pdf) (Accessed February 17, 2023)

<sup>2</sup> Block, S. June 3, 2021. “Mining Energy-Transition Metals: National Aims, Local Conflicts.” MSCI.

<https://www.msci.com/www/blog-posts/mining-energy-transitionmetals/02531033947>. (Accessed February 17, 2023)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention. August 18, 2021.

[https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/resources/default.htm?CDC\\_AA\\_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fnceh%2Flead%2Fwaterlines.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/resources/default.htm?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fnceh%2Flead%2Fwaterlines.htm)

source of toxic waste releases in the US,<sup>3</sup> industry expansion would disproportionately impact indigenous communities. This outcome is not consistent with a just transition to clean energy.

HF 409 is a simple, common-sense step we can take in Minnesota to advance transportation equity, cut carbon emissions, reduce metals demand, avoid exacerbating environmental injustices stemming from hardrock mining, and promote a just transition to clean energy. We support its passage.

Andrea Lovoll  
Legislative Director  
Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy  
[alovoll@mncenter.org](mailto:alovoll@mncenter.org)

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<sup>3</sup> Environmental Protection Agency. March 2022. "Releases by Chemical and Industry."  
<https://www.epa.gov/trinationalanalysis/releases-chemical-and-industry>. (Accessed February 17, 2023)