



March 7, 2025

MN House Transportation Finance and Policy Committee
Rep. Jon Koznick, Chair
Minnesota House of Representatives
Centennial Office Building
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Koznick and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Duluth Area Chamber of Commerce, I write to express our strong opposition to House File 1167, which seeks to prohibit expenditures for the Northern Lights Express (NLX) passenger rail project. The Chamber firmly supports the advancement of NLX as a transformative investment in our regional and statewide economy, transportation network, and overall quality of life.

The NLX project represents a strategic opportunity to expand Minnesota's transportation infrastructure by providing a fast, reliable, and sustainable passenger rail connection between the Twin Cities and Duluth. This project is not just about transportation—it is about economic development, workforce mobility, tourism growth, and ensuring Minnesota remains a leader in forward-thinking infrastructure investments.

The Economic Benefits of NLX

The Northern Lights Express will serve as a powerful economic engine, fostering job creation, business growth, and regional development:

- **Job Creation & Economic Growth** – NLX is expected to generate thousands of jobs during construction and sustain long-term employment through operations and maintenance. Increased connectivity will drive new business opportunities in Greater Minnesota, particularly in tourism, hospitality, and retail sectors.
- **Increased Tourism & Business Access** – Duluth and the surrounding communities rely heavily on tourism and business travel. A fast, efficient passenger rail service will make it easier for visitors and business professionals to travel to and from our region, increasing revenue for local businesses and enhancing economic vitality.
- **Workforce Mobility** – Reliable rail service will allow greater access to jobs and educational institutions for workers and students, strengthening the workforce pipeline between the Twin Cities and Greater Minnesota.

A Safe, Sustainable Transportation Alternative

With rising concerns over highway congestion, traffic safety, and carbon emissions, Minnesota must invest in a diversified transportation system. The NLX will:



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- Reduce strain on I-35 by providing an alternative mode of travel, improving safety and reducing highway maintenance costs.
- Lower emissions by reducing vehicle miles traveled, contributing to Minnesota's sustainability goals.
- Offer an affordable and efficient transportation option for commuters, students, seniors, and residents who may not have access to a personal vehicle.

Leveraging Federal and State Investment

Minnesota has a unique opportunity to capitalize on federal funding and infrastructure investments for passenger rail. By prohibiting expenditures on the NLX, Minnesota risks forfeiting significant federal support that could otherwise be used to advance the state's transportation infrastructure. Rejecting HF 1167 ensures that Minnesota remains competitive for these critical funds.

The Duluth Area Chamber of Commerce urges you to oppose HF 1167 and instead advocate for continued investment in the Northern Lights Express. This project will generate long-term economic and transportation benefits that will strengthen our communities and support Minnesota's economic future.

Thank you for your leadership and commitment to Minnesota's transportation and economic development. We appreciate your consideration of this vital issue.

Respectfully,

Matt Baumgarter, MBA
President
Duluth Area Chamber of Commerce