



Twin Cities to Duluth

May 8, 2025

Transportation Conference Committee Members
Minnesota House and Senate
State Capitol
St. Paul, MN 55155

RE: Support for Preserving State Match for Northern Lights Express – HF2438/SF2082

Dear Members of the Transportation Conference Committee,

On behalf of the Northern Lights Express (NLX) Alliance, I write to express our strong support for the House position in HF2438, which preserves the \$194 million state match for the Northern Lights Express passenger rail project. We are deeply concerned by the Senate position, which removes nearly all of this funding and puts the entire project — and its substantial federal match — at risk.

The Northern Lights Express is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to connect Minneapolis to Duluth with reliable, modern, and higher-speed passenger rail. The project has been studied, vetted, and advanced over the past two decades with strong support and widespread local backing from cities, counties, businesses, and economic development organizations along the corridor.

Most critically, this \$194 million state investment will unlock up to \$928 million in federal funding currently under consideration by the Federal Railroad Administration through the Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail program. The return on investment is extraordinary — bringing nearly \$5 in federal funding for every \$1 from the state. Failure to

include the state match this session would likely result in the loss of this historic federal opportunity.

Beyond the numbers, NLX is about connectivity, economic opportunity, and transportation equity. It will:

- Link the Twin Cities metro with Greater Minnesota, expanding mobility and economic access;
- Create thousands of jobs through construction and long-term operations;
- Reduce highway congestion and emissions, providing a climate-friendly alternative to car travel; and
- Reinforce regional economic hubs, from Minneapolis and Coon Rapids to Cambridge, Hinckley, and Duluth.

The Northern Lights Express will serve a corridor of over 700,000 residents and is expected to attract over 700,000 riders annually. It will especially benefit residents without access to a vehicle, students, seniors, tourists, and military personnel traveling to and from the region.

In short: this is a transformative project — and the time to act is now.

We strongly urge you to adopt the House language in HF2438 and retain the full state match for the Northern Lights Express. The future of this vital, federally-supported transportation project depends on it.

Thank you for your leadership and consideration.

Sincerely,

Keith Nelson

Keith Nelson
Chair, Northern Lights Express Alliance