



May 5, 2023

RE: Support for GHG and VMT Reduction Measures

Dear: Transportation Conference Committee Members,
Minnesota House and Senate Leadership,
Governor Walz, and
Lieutenant Governor Flanagan,

We are writing to express our excitement and thanks for new and historic climate policies included in both the House and Senate transportation omnibus bills (HF2887). These policies—formerly HF2677 and SF2790—would put Minnesota at the forefront of responsible climate action and help ensure that the state meets its own climate-related targets in the transportation sector, Minnesota’s largest source of climate pollution. Importantly, these policies create a framework that prioritizes mitigation investments in historically disadvantaged communities and areas of persistent poverty.

Minnesota is fortunate that past and present leadership established statewide climate-related goals. Among these are statewide greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction targets in the Next Generation Energy Act and transportation-specific GHG reduction targets in MnDOT’s recently adopted statewide multimodal transportation plan (SMTP). In addition—in recognition that Minnesota’s climate goals cannot be reached through electrification alone—the Minnesota Climate Action Framework and MnDOT’s SMTP established vehicle miles traveled (VMT) reduction targets and benchmarks last year.

Goals, however, are only as valuable as their implementation. The framework proposed in the transportation omnibus bills brings accountability to these existing GHG and VMT reduction targets, moving the targets from aspiration to action. This proposed framework sets up the necessary structure for action yet provides an appropriate pathway for flexibility.

On the transportation front, the policies:

1. Require that MnDOT, a metropolitan planning organization (MPO), or project sponsor assess contemplated trunk highway capacity expansion projects for consistency with established GHG and VMT goals.

2. If a proposed capacity expansion project is not consistent with established GHG or VMT goals, MnDOT must either adjust the project to bring it into conformance with those goals, or interlink the project—in a portfolio approach—with other funded projects so that the full portfolio of interlinked projects meets GHG and VMT reduction goals before proceeding with the project.

In addition, in recognition of the fact that VMT and associated GHG emissions are heavily influenced by land use patterns, and that the Twin Cities metro has the greatest VMT reduction opportunities, the policies:

1. Require the Metropolitan Council to establish a climate action plan and forecasts related to GHG emissions and VMT, including from land use.
2. Require the Metropolitan Council to specify how climate considerations should be incorporated into existing comprehensive planning processes and plans.

Not only will these policies ensure we follow land use best practices: they will also reduce air pollution (and correspondingly improve health outcomes), provide for safer streets (when traffic deaths constitute the second-highest cause of mortality for children), result in “critical connections” within and between communities (as MnDOT articulates in its SMTP), and deliver extraordinary financial returns for the state and for families ([a 2023 RMI analysis reveals that meeting Minnesota’s established VMT reduction targets could result in a staggering \\$91 billion in cumulative returns by 2050](#)).

The GHG and VMT assessment and mitigation framework in the transportation omnibus bills adds a layer of accountability into MnDOT’s processes. The flexible mitigation framework not only prioritizes localized mitigation and mitigations that benefit historically disadvantaged communities and areas of persistent poverty, but it also allows for a statewide mitigation portfolio approach if needed for a particular project.

We were thrilled to see Minnesota step into a national leadership position with the 100% Clean Energy bill passed earlier this legislative session. It is now time to address climate pollution from Minnesota’s highest emitting sector: transportation. This policy ensures that as we make important transportation investments to increase access, improve safety, and facilitate economic activity, we do so in a way that secures both near- *and* long-term prosperity in Minnesota.

Sincerely,

Move Minnesota Action	Minnesota Environmental Partnership
Minnesota Interfaith Power and Light	Honor the Earth
Health Professionals for a Healthy Climate	Amalgamated Transit Union
Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy	Fresh Energy
COPAL	BikeMN
Sierra Club North Star Chapter	Climate Generation
Mn350	Isaiah MN
League of Women Voters Minnesota	Union of Concerned Scientists
100% Campaign	Natural Resources Defense Council
Russ Stark, Chief Resilience Officer, Saint Paul	CURE
League of Women Voters Upper Mississippi River Region	