

Good Morning,

I write today to implore the committee to either keep the sales tax at 0.75. With our cold weather, MN needs a transit system that arrives frequently in order to reduce waiting outside, but frequency is not a cheap thing.

The Met Council when presenting in January to the Transportation Committee said that there will be a \$260mil fiscal cliff if they brought back 90% of pre-covid service. My question is why are we settling for 90% of pre-covid service when we have a climate emergency? The legislature has acted to ensure electric vehicles are mandated in the future, and sustainable energy sources. But electric vehicles are not the only answer. If everyone is using the vehicles it will still require additional billions in highway infrastructure, exposing our citizens to particulate matter, the dangers of traffic violence, and a substantial increase in our energy grid needs.

The sales tax that has been proposed features 11 separate items that must be spent on every year by the MetCouncil. While they are good things to spend on to ensure a better system, it leaves less money to support the most important role of a bus provider which is to make sure the buses run frequently.

I have heard said many times in the committee that transit is dead. I highly disagree with this. While certain services like peak only express services to downtown like express buses and Northstar Commuter Rail are recovering only a fraction of their ridership. Routes like the D Line are already surpassing their pre-covid equivalent ridership on weekends, and within 90% of pre-covid ridership on weekdays. Ridership is trending up throughout the city even through a driver shortage that has slashed frequency. With a historic investment in our transit service you can show to riders that our best days are truly ahead of us.

The e-bike tax credits, the Midtown Greenway provisions, and fully funding the Northern Lights Express are also all things that we must fund.

Our transit users are watching, don't abandon them for car centric funding.

Tim Marino