

Good morning, my name is Keith Allen, and I'm here to express my strong opposition to HF494 and ask lawmakers to reject the funding prohibition on ReConnect Rondo. For more than 15 years, Rondo residents have led the work to create a bold, community-driven vision to repair the harm caused by I-94. This project is the result of years of community leadership, planning, and bi-partisan partnerships to create a model for how infrastructure investments can be used to restore what was lost while creating new opportunities for the future.

ReConnect Rondo's vision has earned local, state, and national recognition, including from the White House, for its innovative approach to community restoration, economic development, and transportation solutions. This project feasibility study concludes that this project could generate up to 576 housing units, 13 acres of park and open space, a business incubator hub or market place and generate for the city up to \$4.2 million in city revenue annually. This is important to not only the city of St. Paul, but also the state of Minnesota as it has every potential to create hundreds of permanent jobs, and serve as a hub for 21st-century careers in tech, engineering, and clean energy—while also providing pathways into traditional skilled trades like plumbing, electrical work, and construction. Furthermore, this project preserves the continual traffic flow on I-94 while adding new land to support housing, small businesses, and community spaces. It directly addresses the social, economic, and environmental harms caused by I-94, making it eligible for the same federal and state transportation funding as any other infrastructure project in Minnesota. HF494 threatens to undo years of trust-building, community engagement, and equity-centered planning. Prohibiting funding for ReConnect Rondo sends the message that communities working with jurisdictional stakeholders and legislatures to right historical wrongs are not worthy of investment.

I urge you to reject HF494 and stand with the Rondo community in their vision to reclaim, reconnect, and revitalize their neighborhood—building a stronger future not just for Rondo, but for the entire region.

Thank you.

Keith