

Thank you Chair Liz Olson and members of the Ways and Means Committee,

My name is Darwin Schaeferlane, and I am a Bloomington resident, who has lived in the Twin Cities for most of my life. I, like many in my generation, do not own or drive a car, instead relying upon walking, cycling, and public transit to get around. I want to highlight the absolutely incredible provisions in this bill for those like me; Increasing the sales tax, including a delivery tax, and funding BRT and bus network upgrades, this Omnibus bill will improve our bus system in desperate need of service improvements to be more accessible and attractive to riders. Even greater, this bill includes funding for much needed Intercity passenger rail upgrades, including the TCMC Amtrak line as well as Northern Lights Express.

Having to climb over snow just to push a pedestrian crossing button should not be the norm, but it is right now. Having to climb over snow banks to get to the bus shouldn't be normal, but it is right now. Having to deal with broken, ADA-violating, inaccessible curbs and winding, outdated sidewalks, and unprotected bike infrastructure should not be the norm, but it is right now. We need these taxes to fund our transit system, our roads and sidewalks and multimodal and bike infrastructure. That being said, with all of those barriers, you still see people walking, biking, and taking public transit because we have to and we need these options.

Furthermore, passenger rail that is Bidirectional, reliable, and frequent is the key to a successful state transportation network. Our generation needs options, and the US is seeing brain drain from those of us who are leaving to places that do have that quality passenger rail. By committing to Northern Lights Express by matching the funds with the House version, as well as funding the Twin Cities-Milwaukee-Chicago Amtrak service, including studying a second round

trip to Fargo-Moorhead, Minnesota lays the groundwork for connecting the state together through transportation options that are sustainable, high capacity, and bring Minnesotans together.

Anticipating more of these repeat arguments and concerns, I would like to be 100% clear that the Northstar getting extended to St Cloud is a necessary move that should have been done in the first place. Bad politics and the federal government held back what could have been the first line in this Minnesota Intercity rail network, and criticisms of ridership without acknowledging that fact, as well as a pandemic schedule of just four daily trains without weekend or reverse direction service, are entirely bad faith arguments. You can't set up a project to struggle and then complain when it struggles. You can't replace the capacity trains provide, especially on game day event service that carries 800-1000 extra people on a single train according to the Met Council, with buses or cars alone. The Northstar construction cost was 3-4 times cheaper than what it would have taken to widen the highways in that corridor, to move the same amount of people. As a former Fridley resident who lived next to the Northstar station for 10 years and used it many times to get to Twins games and Field trips in school, the Northstar is worth the investment and extension, which would be LITERALLY cheaper than removing it.

My only requests are that this Omnibus bill includes the funding to complete US-BR41 aka the North Star Bikeway. Completing the halfway finished trail will allow even further transportation options in the Corridor from the twin cities to the Arrowhead region of Minnesota. I also want this committee to match the funding allocated in the House Bill to several projects

including Northern Lights Express, and fix the inconsistencies between both versions to ensure no corners are cut and we get the full package.

By that, I want to be entirely clear, as transit riders, bike riders, and pedestrians we have been showing up to these committees, but car drivers have not. Their needs are expected to be met by default but we have to fight so hard for alternatives to car dependency. Our taxes pay for roads and highways we can't use, and I expect these taxes to pay for infrastructure we can use to give us options.

To address even more points, if you are concerned about delivery fee taxes, you should be more worried that people can't safely walk or bike to their nearest stores and are reliant on delivery apps in the first place. Just a reminder that up to 50% of car trips are taken within a distance of 3 miles and less, 28% being less than a mile, which is hardly different for delivery driving. As someone who is disabled, with a mother who has stage 4 breast cancer, and often are reliant on delivery apps, I can tell you we wouldn't need delivery as much if we could safely walk and bike to the stores and restaurants we order food from. If anything, as a former Uber eats delivery cyclist, I request that the delivery tax exempt orders done by bike and foot. Instead of virtue signaling to disabled Minnesotans about the impact of a sales tax on deliveries, I urge these concerns to go towards the lack of safe sidewalks, bike infrastructure, and access to restaurants and stores, which is exactly what this 75 cent tax would fix.

Thank you for reading this letter and I hope these concerns are heard, and we can bring forward the country's best Transportation plan.

