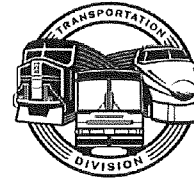


Nicholas J Katich
Legislative Director,
Chairperson

Robert L Dickerson
Assistant Director

Brian L. Hunstad
Secretary



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Minnesota Legislative Board

Dear Transportation Conference Committee Members:

On behalf of SMART-TD Minnesota, I am writing in support of the Northern Lights Express passenger rail project connecting the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul to the Twin Ports of Duluth, MN and Superior, WI. Thank you to the Minnesota House and Senate for including funding for the NLX project in your Omnibus Transportation Bill!

A tremendous amount of work has been done by many groups and individuals to get this project to where it is today. The timing could not be better with significant federal funds available to complete the project. The environmental benefits of passenger rail service as well as the convenience of traveling by train resonates with many citizens in our state. Embracing public transportation will reduce the number of vehicles miles on our roads.

NLX is ready to serve. The Northern Lights Express will carry veterans from Northern Minnesota and Wisconsin to the Twin Cities where they will easily access the VA hospital in Minneapolis. Students will commute to and from many of Minnesota's distinguished colleges and universities. This rail project will allow sports fans to get to all the stadiums in the metro area. With Duluth being the gateway to the natural wonders of Minnesota's arrowhead, many vacationers will use this service to get there. With more workers and employers realizing the benefits of working from home this project will allow for workforce development outside the metro area.

My members are excited at the prospect of new work opportunities in passenger service and have been following the progress of this project for many years now. This is the year to get the Northern Lights Express funded. We urge you to adopt the House position—fully funding the NLX project—so the state may access 80% in federal funds to build NLX now. Thank you for taking the time to consider our position on this project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nick Katich", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Nick Katich
MN Legislative Director, SMART-TD