



City Council Member Andrew Johnson – 12th Ward

350 S. Fifth St. - Room 307

Minneapolis, MN 55415

TEL 612.673.2212

www.minneapolismn.gov

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Dear Transportation Conference Committee Members:

On behalf of the Northern Lights Express Alliance, I want to thank both the Minnesota House and Senate for including funding for the Northern Lights Express in your Omnibus Transportation Bills.

For almost 20 years, our NLX Alliance and supporters across the state, including a broad coalition of Labor, business groups, and communities, have been working to get the project to this position. It has been studied. Stakeholders have been engaged. NLX is ready to go. The next step is to secure state funding.

With significant federal investment available now, the timing could not be better. The state's investment in NLX will leverage 80% funding by the federal government to build 152 miles of job-generating, higher-speed inter-city passenger-rail service. The Northern Lights Express is one of the most shovel ready passenger rail projects in the nation. The state funding for this project would access federal dollars and seize the opportunity to connect the Twin Ports with the Twin Cities via passenger rail.

Studies show NLX construction, including safety improvements to the existing rail lines and building stations, will generate some 3,000 new jobs. More than 500 jobs will be permanent.

With four daily round trips, NLX means quick, easy, affordable trips for military veterans to and from Duluth, Hinkley, Cambridge, or Coon Rapids to the VA Hospital in Minneapolis for services. For students, seniors, sports fans, folks with disabilities, and people looking for a night out in the Twin Cities or Duluth, NLX means safe, fast, and convenient travel. Businesspeople get 2.5 hours of smooth, easy travel to do productive work while someone else drives. For the environment, tens of thousands of car trips will be replaced with clean, higher speed trains. There is plenty to like with this opportunity. Thank you for your support of NLX.

This is the year to get the Northern Lights Express fully funded. **We urge you to adopt the House position so that the state doesn't lose access to the 80% match in federal funds for not only the full line, but also modern equipment.** The House position will ensure the project gets built – and with the best passenger experience, ridership levels, and long-term value for Minnesota.

Thank you for taking the time to consider this and for your dedication to ensuring success in transit.

Sincerely,

Andrew Johnson
Chair, Northern Lights Express Alliance
Chair, Public Works & Infrastructure - City of Minneapolis