

TO:

Speaker of the House Melissa Hortman  
Senate Majority Leader Kari Dziedzic  
Governor Tim Walz and Lieutenant Governor Peggy Flanagan  
Chair Frank Hornstein, House Transportation Finance & Policy Committee  
Chair Scott Dibble, Senate Transportation Finance & Policy Committee  
Chair Fue Lee, House Capital Investment Committee  
Chair Sandra Pappas, Senate Capital Investment Committee

March 27, 2022

We are a coalition of elected and civic leaders writing to you today in support \$200 million investment in the Blue Line Extension Light Rail project (HF 1576 and HF 1577 and SF 1706 and SF 1707).

The Blue Line Extension Light Rail project will bring transformational benefits to residents from Minneapolis to Brooklyn Park. The communities served by this line are transit-reliant, racially diverse, and have experienced historical disinvestment. The Blue Line Extension is an opportunity to connect them to the broader transit network while providing sustainable transportation options. It will ignite economic development for small businesses, result in more affordable housing options, increase access to educational opportunities, and build wealth for working families.

After a century of disinvestment, racial covenants, and redlining, we have a duty to ensure current residents, small businesses, and cultural institutions are both engaged in and able to benefit from the increased development and amenities in their neighborhoods.

Investments in transit are also imperative towards meeting the needs of communities disproportionately impacted by climate change. The Blue Line Extension is a key step towards addressing environmental injustices that have been inflicted on these communities, from increased rates of air pollution to large swaths of land being brownfield sites. The success of the Blue Line Extension will dramatically reduce air pollution, clean up brownfield sites, and spur millions of dollars worth of transit-oriented development.

Communities along the Blue Line Extension corridor have been waiting for too long to receive the enhanced transit service they have been promised. We have some of the highest rates in the state for households without regular access to a personal vehicle, and who rely on transit to meet daily needs. We also have a higher number of people experiencing poverty, have a greater percentage of people of color, have high concentrations of cost-burdened households, and have among the lowest adult educational attainment rates.

The federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act provides a once-in-a-lifetime federal investment in our nation's infrastructure, including doubling the highly competitive federal program that funds large public transit construction. The state's investment will ensure we can leverage nearly one billion in federal funding. We can't afford to let federal funding and good paying construction jobs go to the peer metro regions like Austin, Memphis, and Salt Lake City instead.

Hennepin County and our partner municipalities are poised to make once-in-a-generation investments in utilities and infrastructure in the corridor, made possible by the scale and scope of construction that the Blue Line Extension will begin. Funding the Blue Line Extension this year will help to guarantee

cascading investments in sewer, stormwater management, bicycle and pedestrian accommodations, green space, and more.

Now is the time to invest in the transit projects positioned to bring transformational benefits to communities along the line, our region, and Minnesotans.

Signed:

Mayor Winston Hollies of Brooklyn Park

John Budziszewski  
Councilmember - Ward 3, City of Crystal

David Cummings  
Councilmember - Ward 4, City of Crystal

Forest Eidbo  
Councilmember – Section 2 City of Crystal

Aaron Wagner  
Councilmember - Ward 4, City of Robbinsdale

L. Kamaty Diahn  
Executive Director, The Organization of Liberians in Minnesota