

## TESTIMONY

To: Minnesota House Transportation Finance and Policy Committee

From: Tom Sorel, Sambatek Director of Public Programs, representing the Minnesota Council of Engineering Consultants (ACEC)

Re: The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) and its Potential for Minnesota Transportation

Date: February 3, 2022

Chair Hornstein and members of the Committee. I am Tom Sorel, Director of Public Programs for Sambatek, and I'm here representing the Minnesota Council of Engineering Consultants (ACEC). Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony today.

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) represents an unprecedented time in our nation's history to make critical investments in transportation infrastructure that will have a positive impact on the quality of life for our citizens. Based on formula funding alone, Minnesota can expect to receive approximately \$4.8 billion over five years in Federal highway funding for highways and bridges, which represents an increase of about 30% more than the State's Federal-aid highway formula under current law. In addition, additional funding opportunities are being provided for transit, rail, airports, EV charging, resiliency, safety, and reconnecting communities.

Engineering is a leading indicator of economic performance. When state and local transportation agencies can't develop long-term funding programs, our firms have a difficult time hiring engineers or make necessary equipment purchases for designing and delivering those projects. When firms aren't working on preconstruction activities, those projects can't move to construction, which means fewer construction workers working, less economic activity being generated, ultimately, goods not getting to market and U.S. businesses not being competitive. The transportation community has three legs that must collaboratively work together in a high performing way: public agencies, consultants, and contractors. All three legs of the community need to be healthy for infrastructure projects to be consistently delivered on time, within cost, and on schedule with the highest of quality. It is extremely vital that public agency match is provided over the lifetime of the federal bill so that we have a high performing industry in Minnesota that can anticipate projects, react, and deliver.

It is also important for us to note, that reliable and consistent sources of funding will allow the engineering community to help determine capacity needs to support the public agencies. ACEC MN consists of an incredibly diverse group of firms, from small to large. These firms are local, regional, and national. They all work in every sector of

our economy including transportation, water/wastewater, energy, environmental work, private development, natural resources, and much more. We know there is a common need for more talented engineers in the private sector and all companies are doing an outstanding job of recruiting top talent for their firms, entry level and experienced engineers. The state of Minnesota has been very resilient in responding to engineering challenges in the past and has always used existing capacity and new resources to deliver critical projects, including some that were unexpected. As an industry, all engineering firms stand ready to deliver the projects that are an outcome of the IIJA. Collectively, we feel confident that we currently have the capacity to perform at a very high level and will seek additional resources where needed to enhance that capacity.

Looking forward, we also believe that with dedicated long term funding sources to match federal funds we can enhance additional private sector capacity and collaborative public-private sector delivery models can be modified. To get programs and projects delivered, ACEC firms are ready to assist the public agencies in new ways that can demonstrate the value of collaborative high performing teams. New models that include staff integration, program/project delivery oversight, operations management, project controls with cost and scheduling, and the production of early scoping documents can go a long way in the effective delivery of IIJA projects and programs.

Thank you so much for the opportunity to provide this testimony today to support the implementation of the Infrastructure and Jobs Act and its impact on transportation in Minnesota.