

March 22, 2023

Rep. Frank Hornstein
563 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Chair Hornstein,

Please accept this letter of support for the direction of the delete-all amendment to HF 2346 regarding a metro-area sales tax for our regional transportation system. Thank you for your efforts to fund this vital public need.

We recognize that the metro's public transportation programs are critical infrastructure for tens of thousands of metro residents each and every day. In dense communities like ours in Ramsey County, many of our constituents build their lives around these services. Dense retail and employment centers like downtown St. Paul, Maplewood Mall, and Rosedale Mall depend on transit to help workers and customers avoid congestion and reduce their need for parking. We hear regularly from business leaders asking how transit can be improved, and telling us that their employees overwhelmingly prefer working in places that are connected by fast, safe, and reliable public transit.

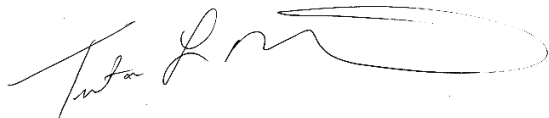
Ramsey County is more committed to transit than it has ever been. In addition to the METRO Green Line light rail, we are under construction (in partnership with Washington County) on the METRO Gold Line BRT to Woodbury, and have advanced planning in the METRO Purple Line BRT and the Riverview Corridor modern streetcar. Our investments are guided by our All Abilities Transportation Network policy, which reflects the need to create a transportation system that provides equitable access for all people in our communities by prioritizing walking, biking, and public transit before automobiles.

Despite our support for public transit, we continue to have strong concerns about accountability and transparency under the current governance model of the Metropolitan Council. This additional funding will make little difference for Ramsey County communities if it is not accompanied by a commitment to regional equity and balance. We urge additional language to clarify the Metropolitan Council's responsibility to equitably spread these investments throughout the transit service area. We also support the restriction on funding to the Southwest light rail project.

We are also pleased to see dedicated funding in the bill for expansion of Metro Transit's arterial bus rapid transit program, which we hope will help to fund the planned METRO G Line BRT (Rice St and Robert St) and METRO H Line BRT (Como/Maryland and White Bear). These investments will complement other planned Ramsey County investments including the Rice Street Revitalization project (HF 972) and Riversedge (HF 964).

We strongly encourage legislators to support this legislation and ensure that our regional transit system can continue to grow to meet the needs of our communities.

Sincerely,



Trista MatasCastillo
Chair, Ramsey County Board of Commissioners



Rafael Ortega
Chair, Ramsey County Regional Rail Authority