



Association of Minnesota Counties

April 13, 2021

Chair Lee and Members of the House Capital Investment Committee:

On behalf of the Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC), we appreciate the opportunity to comment on the DE Amendment to HF337, the House Omnibus 2021 Bonding Bill. As an organization that represents all of Minnesota's 87 counties, we appreciate the bill's investment in transportation and housing.

AMC and the Minnesota County Engineers Association are grateful for the additional funding for both the Local Road Improvement Program (LRIP) and the Local Bridge Replacement Program (LBRP) included in the bill. Last year's bonding bill included record-level investments for both programs, but there are still many local road and bridge projects across the state that would benefit from additional investment. Currently, there are over six hundred deficient bridges that need funding over the next three years. Additionally, MnDOT State Aid received 421 applications requesting \$342 million in projects for the most recent solicitation for the LRIP, well exceeding the \$75 million available. We also appreciate the bill's investment in transit with the addition of \$40 million for the E Line A-BRT.

We strongly support \$200 million in housing infrastructure bonds included in the bill. Minnesota is experiencing its greatest housing shortage in decades and homelessness is on the rise. AMC has increasingly been advocating for the dire need for affordable housing options. A lack of housing options has catastrophic effects on families, communities, and economies. Housing infrastructure bonds (HIB) leverage local, federal, and private investment and spur development that otherwise would not occur. At a local government level, HIBs are a tool that allows counties across the state to partner with non-profit organizations to develop new housing units to help meet the needs in their communities. Without housing bonds, it's unclear how housing development and preservation can be achieved at a rate that would make any meaningful impact. Additionally, we fully support the \$50 million in housing infrastructure bonds dedicated for shelter facilities to develop much needed emergency shelters. Counties across the state are seeing significant adverse impacts on unsheltered individuals and families, which demands more from county budgets that support many of the services provided to those experiencing homelessness. While we recognize emergency shelter beds are a short-term solution for individuals and families sleeping outside, they are the starting point to gaining long-term stability.

Finally, AMC has not had an opportunity to fully gather member feedback and evaluate our position on the jail study requested in Section 4, Article 42. Though we welcome the opportunity for much needed assistance with funding for costly jail infrastructure projects, which are often mandated by the state, we also value the ability to assess which options are right for each local community. We hope to work with you on this legislation as you move forward with the process and are happy to share our feedback as this bill moves through the Legislature.

On behalf of AMC, we would like to thank Chair Lee and committee members for your work on the bonding bill this session and for the opportunity to comment on the DE Amendment to HF 337.

Sincerely,



Rich Sve, Lake County Commissioner
President, Association of Minnesota Counties