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March 27, 2026

The Honorable Steve Womack
Chairman
Transportation, Housing, and Urban
Development, and Related Agencies
Subcommittee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mike Quigley
Ranking Member
Transportation, Housing, and Urban
Development, and Related Agencies
Subcommittee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

We are writing to you today to urge the Transportation, Housing, and Urban Development, and Related Agencies Subcommittee to include language in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2027 appropriations bill that would eliminate funding to two transportation projects within Minnesota, which are the Blue Line Light Rail Extension (Blue Line) and the Northern Lights Express (NLX) commuter line. These projects are significant financial burdens and are completely unnecessary uses of taxpayer funds.

Minnesotans rely on investments in their transportation infrastructure to promote efficiency, economic growth, and development. Federal transportation investment in states, which we have all been long-term supporters, is essential, but so is ensuring these projects are a valuable use of taxpayer dollars. These two projects raise serious financial concerns, which would lead to millions of dollars spent on projects that are not supported by the community or necessary for Minnesota's long-term growth. All long-term investments in these projects should be closely evaluated, and all short-term funding for these specific projects should be eliminated.

The Blue Line Light Rail Extension is a 13.4-mile light rail track between downtown Minneapolis and Brooklyn Park. This extension has raised serious concerns that it will be over budget and cause seven intersections in the area to be over capacity.¹ The project is currently priced at \$3.2 billion and today is only in the design phase, with the first train scheduled to leave the station in 2030. This extension is already shaping up to be yet another transportation project that will lead to minimal ridership, huge capital costs, and adverse effects on Minnesotans. Already, the 27,000 weekday riders projected on the Blue Line have been more than halved to 12,500 riders since its inception, yet this extension plan has continued.²

Secondly, the proposed Northern Lights Express commuter line, travelling from Duluth to St. Paul, also raises serious concerns as it has an estimated \$600 million dollar price tag. In 2023, the Minnesota legislature allocated \$116 million as a 20% local match in hopes of leveraging

1 "Blue Line Extension Chapter 3 Transportation." *Metropolitan Council*, 14 June 2024, metro council.org/Transportation/Projects/Light-Rail-Projects/METRO-Blue-Line-Extension/Publications-And-Resources/Environmental/SDEIS/BLE_SDEIS_Chapter-3-Transportation.aspx#page=21.

2 Johnson, Jerome, and Kristel Porter. "A Timely Time-out for the Blue Line Extension." *Star Tribune*, 23 Feb. 2025, www.startribune.com/a-timely-time-out-for-the-blue-line-extension/601227277.

future federal grants.³ This leaves taxpayers potentially liable for a \$400 million loan for yet another mismanaged commuter line. Without federal funding, this project cannot move forward, and the \$116 million set aside can be used for more immediate and necessary infrastructure needs.

As the Transportation, Housing, and Urban Development Subcommittee prepares the bill for FY27, we respectfully urge you to consider adding a provision that would prohibit federal funding to the Northern Lights Express commuter line and the Blue Line Light Rail Extension project. Thank you for your consideration, and please know that our offices are willing to assist in whatever way possible.

Sincerely,



Tom Emmer
Member of Congress



Pete Stauber
Member of Congress



Michelle Fischbach
Member of Congress



Brad Finstad
Member of Congress

³ "Northern Lights Express." *Northern Lights Express - MnDOT*, www.dot.state.mn.us/nlx/#:~:text=In%20May%202023%2C%20the%20Minnesota,passenger%20cars%20for%20the%20service. Accessed 6 May 2025.