



Appendix F

LETTERS AND RESOLUTIONS

MARCH 2015

APPENDIX E. LETTERS AND RESOLUTIONS

This Appendix contains letters and resolutions received throughout the duration of the State Rail Plan project Letters include:

- Albert Lea Convention and Visitors Bureau
- Albert Lea Economic Development Agency
- Albert Lea – Freeborn County Chamber of Commerce
- All Aboard Minnesota
- Bike Northfield
- Bridgewater Township
- Carleton College
- Chippewa Valley Transit Alliance
- City of Albert Lea
- City of Arlington
- City of Austin
- City of Dundas
- City of Faribault
- City of Farmington
- City of Lonsdale
- City of Mankato
- City of Minneapolis
- City of Morton
- City of Northfield
- City of Northfield Economic Development Authority
- City of Owatonna
- City of Richfield
- City of Rosemount
- City of St. Louis Park

- City of Saint Paul
- City of Savage
- City of Shakopee
- City of Sleepy Eye
- City of Springfield
- City of Tracy
- City of Waseca
- City of Winona
- Dakota County Regional Railroad Authority
- Faribault Area Chamber of Commerce
- Farmers Union Industries
- Freeborn County
- Friends of the Mill Towns State Trail
- Goodhue County
- Harvest Land Cooperative
- Heartland Corn Products
- Meadowland Farmers Coop
- Minnesota Farm Bureau
- Minnesota State Legislators David Bly, Frank Hornstein, Alice Hausman, Rick Hanson, Tina Liebling, Dan Sparks, Clark Johnson, and John Considine
- Minnesota Valley Regional Rail Authority
- Northfield Convention and Visitors Bureau
- Northfield Hospital and Clinics
- Northfield Public Schools
- Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority
- Redwood Area Development Corporation
- Renville County

- Renville County HRA/EDA
- Rice County Board of Commissioners
- Saint Cloud Area Planning Organization
- Scott County Association for Leadership and Efficiency
- Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community and Tribal Chairman Charlie Vig
- Sibley County
- South Central Grain and Energy
- St. Croix Valley Rail Group
- St. Olaf College
- Steele County Board of Commissioners
- Stepsaver, Inc.
- UFC
- U.S. Highway 169 Corridor Coalition
- West Central Wisconsin Rail Coalition

From: Bruce Anderson <bruce@sustainablecommunitysolutions.com>
Date: January 12, 2015 at 8:55:14 PM CST
To: <Dave.Christianson@state.mn.us>
Cc: <Daniel.Krom@state.mn.us>
Subject: Letter of support for the South Central Inter-City Regional Passenger Rail Project
Reply-To: <bruce@sustainablecommunitysolutions.com>

To the MnDOT Planning Division:

BikeNorthfield supports upgrading the status for Northfield in the 2009 Minnesota Comprehensive Statewide Freight and Passenger Rail Plan from Tier II to the highest priority category, Tier I.

The benefits to bicyclists would include access from Northfield to the extensive and interconnected system of bike trails in the Twin Cities. Southbound service would open Northfield area paved trails, designated off-road areas and the gravel and paved grid based on section lines that cover our region. With a rail corridor continuing south to Faribault and Owatonna as well as east to Rochester these benefits both directions would be expanded dramatically linking urban dwellers to the growing trail system famous for its rural charm.

We strongly encourage MnDOT to support immediate elevation from Tier II to Tier I in the State Rail Plan for restored regional passenger rail service from south central Minnesota on existing rail lines through Northfield.

BikeNorthfield Steering Committee, unanimously adopted 12/18/14
Signed Bruce Anderson, Chairman

Comment: Minnesota Farm Bureau Input To Scoping Process For 2015 Minnesota Rail Plan

Minnesota Farm Bureau is very interested in resolving the on-going and serious challenges of improved rail service in our state. As the circumstances of the past year have demonstrated through the failures in rail service to meet the needs of agricultural commodity shipments in a timely and predictable fashion we consider improvements as a high priority.

The comprehensive planning process considered for the update of the 2010 Statewide Freight and Passenger Rail Plan should focus on the role of how a statewide plan of this nature will translate to improved conditions. Planning for the sake of planning should be avoided and perhaps instead of a 200-plus document, a clearer and definitive game plan for what will be priority actions should be the outcome.

Minnesota Farm Bureau's policy views for these priorities match some of the elements included in the 2010 Minnesota Comprehensive Statewide Freight and Passenger Rail Plan. We believe that fewer bullet items and a greater sense of making priorities be priorities (versus a longer list of items) would make for a better plan.

Beyond a plan that seems more inclined to pursue federal funding as an objective, we suggest that the new plan speak to the role that Minnesota can play in effectively working with the national Surface Transportation Board to facilitate improved reliability for meeting the needs of Minnesota rail shippers.

System Improvements â We agree that there should be continued improvements to the condition and capacity of Minnesota's railroads to accommodate existing and future demand. As noted, the current system for freight is not meeting existing demands and needs improvement. The Minnesota 2015 Rail Plan should give attention to expansion and upgrades of existing shortline and regional railroads to provide better service options for farm shippers.

Resolution of Bottlenecks â We agree that more capacity can be achieved through determining bottlenecks in the system and focusing priority attention for addressing the requirements of necessary improvements.

Safety â We agree that a number of safety actions should be incorporated into the plans for the future. Our members have identified a need for requiring Department of Transportation reflective tape to be placed on the sides of all railcars (as is the case with semi-trailers). Minnesota Farm Bureau policy also spells out support for efforts to improve safety at railroad crossings and maintenance of the right of ways to be free of vegetation and things which obstruct the visibility of trains.

Priority On Freight â The most effective role rail service can provide is for the transportation of bulk freight shipments. We recognize that intermodal systems offer positive opportunity for interconnections and enhancement of transportation methods that combine a variety of advantages. It would be good to up-grade and include the expansion of intermodal service access options throughout the state, as covered in the 2010 Plan.

Discontinue High Speed Rail In The Plan â While concentrating on what should be in the 2015 Minnesota Comprehensive Rail Plan, we also believe that there should not be any more attention given to the concept of a high-speed, passenger-only rail system. Minnesota Farm Bureau policy minces no

words in placing our organization strongly in opposition to the ZipRail project and calls for an end to all public funding for this effort, including studies.

The Plan for 2015 needs to direct limited resources for the greatest benefit of all Minnesota. Giving rail freight priority attention matches the needs for Minnesotans with the best effective use of rail. We look for the next phases of this planning process to provide a detailed overview which documents show a passenger-only rail system will be capable of being financially solvent without on-going taxpayer funding, covering all phases of implementation (pre-construction, construction and future operations).

If the Plan for 2015 ignores our request for discontinuing Minnesota taxpayers involvement in continued funding into high-speed rail, we request a complete economic analysis presented to detail what funding has been spent so far, anticipation for all future public funding which will be required and the manner in which this investment will be returned as benefits for all Minnesota taxpayers.

Sincerely,

Kevin Paap, President
Minnesota Farm Bureau

Name: Kevin Paap

Title: President

Organization: Minnesota Farm Bureau

Address: P.O. Box 64370

City: St. Paul

State: Minnesota

Zip code: 55164

Email: kevin.paap@fbmn.org



102 West Clark Street
Albert Lea, Minnesota 56007
(800) 345-8414
susie@albertleatourism.org
www.albertleatourism.org

March 10, 2015

Mr. Charles Zelle
Commissioner, Minnesota Department of Transportation
395 John Ireland Boulevard
Mailstop 100
St. Paul, MN 55155-1899

RE: South Central Inter-City Regional Passenger Rail Initiative

On behalf of the tourism industry, the Albert Lea Convention & Visitors Bureau would encourage MnDOT to move restored inter-city regional passenger rail service between south central Minnesota and Twin Cities on existing rail lines through Northfield, to Tier One status in the State's revised Rail Plan.

There has been positive grass roots support for this project including the City of Albert Lea, Freeborn County Chamber of Commerce, Albert Lea Economic Development Agency and Freeborn County and we see this project as one of common interest to our community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Susie Petersen".

Susie Petersen, Executive Director
Albert Lea Convention & Visitors Bureau

Cc: Dave Christianson, Project Manager
Minnesota State Rail Plan
Minnesota Department of Transportation
395 John Ireland Boulevard, Mailstop 480
St. Paul, MN 55155-1899

Dan Krom, Passenger Rail Director
Minnesota Department of Transportation
395 John Ireland Boulevard, Mailstop 480
St. Paul, MN 55155-1899

February 2, 2014

Mr. Charles Zelle
Commissioner
Minnesota Dept. of Transportation
395 John Ireland Blvd., Mailstop 100
St. Paul, MN 55155-1899

Dear Commissioner Zelle:

We are writing to encourage MnDOT to move restored inter-city regional passenger rail service between south central Minnesota and the Twin Cities on existing rail lines through Northfield, to Tier One status in the State's revised Rail Plan. We urge MnDot to commence an evaluative study of our rail corridor, including the inter-state connections that this line would restore to our State and communities.

We feel strongly that this project presents sufficient merit to our region and State to warrant serious study for possible development in the near future. We see this project as beneficial to the future economic development of our city and region. We also recognize the potential inter-state rail connections that our particular rail line would open for Minnesotans by virtue of the intersection of our line with three of Amtrak's most heavily trafficked inter-state lines that intersect with our rail line as it continues south to Kansas City and Des Moines.

The 2009 Minnesota Comprehensive Statewide Freight and Passenger Rail Plan identifies the Northfield – Metropolitan corridor for Tier II development. Moving this corridor forward to Tier One Status in the State's Rail Plan for purposes of evaluative preliminary study is more than justified by the forecasted levels of usage, and the apparent technical feasibility of two existing rail alignments that serve our region. Importantly, study of restored passenger service between south central Minnesota and the Twin Cities through Northfield is also justified by the financial feasibility of this project as compared with other proposed passenger rail projects in the State, since our project would introduce passenger service on existing rail lines.

Elevating our central Minnesota passenger rail corridor to Tier One Status in the State Rail Plan is warranted by the enthusiastic grass roots support that this project has



Albert Lea - Freeborn County Chamber of Commerce

February 26, 2015

Commissioner Charles Zelle
Minnesota Department of Transportation
395 John Ireland Blvd
Mailstop 100
St. Paul, MN 55155-1899

Dear Commissioner Zelle,

The Board of Directors of the Albert Lea-Freeborn County Chamber of Commerce would like to encourage MnDOT to move restored inter-city regional passenger rail service between south central Minnesota and the Twin Cities on existing rail lines through Northfield, to Tier One status in the State's revised Rail Plan. We urge MnDOT to commence an evaluative study of our rail corridor, including the inter-state connections that this line would restore to our State and communities.

We feel strongly that this project presents sufficient merit to our region and State to warrant serious study for possible development in the near future. We see this project as beneficial to the economic development of our city and region. We also recognize the potential inter-state rail connections that our particular rail line would open for Minnesotans by virtue of the intersection of our line with three of Amtrak's most heavily trafficked inter-state lines that intersect with our rail line as it continues south to Kansas City and Des Moines.

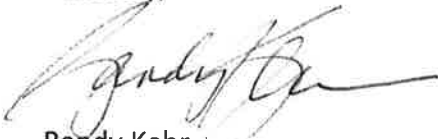
The 2009 Minnesota Comprehensive Statewide Freight and Passenger Rail Plan identifies the Northfield – Metropolitan corridor for Tier II development. Moving this corridor forward to Tier One Status in the State Rail Plan for purposes of evaluative preliminary study is more than justified by the forecasted levels of usage, and the apparent technical feasibility of two existing rail alignments that serve our region. Importantly, study of restored passenger service between south central Minnesota and the Twin Cities through Northfield is also justified by the financial feasibility of this project as compared with other proposed passenger rail projects in the State, since our project would introduce passenger service on existing rail lines.



Elevating our central Minnesota passenger rail corridor to Tier One Status in the State Rail Plan is warranted by the enthusiastic grass roots support that this project has received from regional stakeholders. Representatives of the City of Albert Lea have met with elected and appointed leaders from around our region and we see this project as one of common interest to our communities, region and the State.

We strongly encourage MnDOT to elevate restored regional inter-city passenger rail service from south central Minnesota to the Twin Cities metropolitan area, to Tier One status in the State's revised Rail Plan, and ask you to commence an evaluative study of that alignment as part of your statewide rail planning.

Sincerely,



Randy Kehr
Executive Director
On behalf of:

Randy Cirksena, State Farm Insurance
Chamber Board Chair
Stephanie Haedt, Peterson, Savelkoul, Kolker, Haedt & Benda, Ltd.
Jeff Woodside, Albert Lea Select Foods (2nd Vice Chair)
Catherine Buboltz, Albert Lea Tribune
Justin Oman, Security Bank
Kim Nelson, The Children's Center
Julia Thompson, Freeborn County Shopper
Kade Vershey, Dave Syverson Auto Plaza
Adenuga Atewologun, Riverland Community College
Tricia Dahl, Mayo Clinic Health System Albert Lea
Amy Davis, Cargill Value Added Meats
Jeff Eaton, Eaton Sport and Spine Clinic
Kathy Sabinish, Dave's Phone Booth/Frames-R-Us
Angie Kolker, Freeborn-Mower Cooperative Services

Cc: Dave Christianson, Project Manager, Minnesota State Rail Plan, MN Department of Transportation

Cc: Dan Krom, Passenger Rail Director, Minnesota Department of Transportation

All Aboard Minnesota Comments on State Rail Plan 2015 Preliminary Draft

We appreciate this second opportunity to comment on the State Rail Plan. We strongly stand by the comments made in our previous submission. There are however, several areas in the Preliminary Draft on which we wish to provide further input.

Twin Cities-Albert Lea-Des Moines-Kansas City (I35) Corridor

We strongly support and applaud the movement of the Twin Cities-Albert Lea-Des Moines-Kansas City (I35 Corridor) line to Phase I Corridor status. We believe that after Twin Cities-Chicago, this line has the greatest ridership potential of any of the Phase I Corridors reviewed in the State Rail Plan. Des Moines has larger population (599,789), than any of the other proposed Phase I corridors and as such could likely support 3-5 round trips per day. Extending service to Kansas City more than doubles the ridership potential and could likely support the extension of 2-3 through round trips per day. There is significant auto and intercity bus traffic on this route, providing further evidence of its untapped potential.

SMSA Population 2013- US Census Bureau

Chicago/Milwaukee	11,106,948
Kansas City	2,054,473
Des Moines	599,789
Duluth/Superior	279,887
Sioux Falls	243,513
Fargo/Moorhead	223,490
Rochester	211,853
St. Cloud	191,306
Sioux City	168,714
Eau Claire	164,570
Mankato	98,560

Des Moines and Kansas City are at ideal distances (259 and 478 miles from St. Paul respectively) for conversion of auto users to corridor train travel. They are not so short that taking the train takes longer than driving, but far enough that people would prefer not to drive, especially on winter roads. Historically this route supported 2-3 trains a day previous to Amtrak. The Twin Cities-Des Moines corridor potential was never developed in that era. Passenger train service was stopped on this route two years before Amtrak in 1969. Travel times in the 1960's were 4:30 to Des Moines and 9:10 to Kansas City from St. Paul. Track investments and Centralized Traffic Control signaling could improve these times.

Service to Kansas City would connect the Twin Cities to trains in Iowa and Kansas City that would take Minnesotans to Denver, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Phoenix, Omaha, and Colorado ski areas. According to the Bureau of Transportation Statistics these are major destinations Minnesotans travel to regularly and cannot easily get to by train now. Retirees would be major users of such connections.

Another plus is that this route is a lightly used main line for Union Pacific. It is in good condition and does not have the freight train congestion or oil train traffic of other routes.

All Aboard Minnesota did a field evaluation of this route to Kansas City and on to Houston in 2010 and discovered that almost all of the stations and platforms are still intact and could be converted back to passenger rail use. The line has seen major track investments by UP over the past 20 years and upgrades to the signaling systems.

Direct entry to Minneapolis would be desirable. The state rail plan calls for upgrading the former MN&S trackage from Minneapolis to Northfield. This would allow trains from Kansas City and Des Moines to directly serve Minneapolis and avoid yard congestion south of St. Paul. Trains could then continue on from Minneapolis to St. Paul. We would encourage all parties to seriously examine this option.

Twin Cities-Duluth NLX Corridor

The current plan is for the trains on the Twin Cities-Duluth NLX Corridor to operate on the present BNSF (former Great Northern Railway) route from Minneapolis to Duluth. There are significant freight congestion issues in the Superior terminal that could greatly increase travel times. We would like to suggest a review of the Oliver Bridge route to Duluth from Saunders Junction, which would bypass this congestion in Superior and possibly allow the train a seasonal stop just below the Spirit Mountain ski area on its way to downtown Duluth. Skiers were a significant ridership group when the train operated in the 1970-80's. Existing mainline connections are already in place and the Oliver Bridge has room for a second main track. We only suggest this as an alternative that MNDOT may wish to explore to expedite the train.

Twin Cities-Rochester Zip Rail Corridor

With the local opposition mounting, we suggest that MNDOT abandon the various High Speed Rail alternatives (110-185 MPH) and focus on evaluating this route with 79-90 MPH service. This would allow highway and farm crossings to remain, so that farmers can get to both sides of their property. We still strongly feel that the only practical route is the former CGW Railway route along Highway 56, as almost all of this right of way is intact and has not been converted to farm use. Trying to build down Highway 52 does not make any railroad engineering, train operations or financial sense, even though it looks great on a map. The consultants plan to go around all the small towns along the way would mitigate community impacts. The proposed stop at Rosemount on Highway 42 makes sense. The only other practical alternative is to go down the existing Union Pacific (former Rock Island) route from St. Paul- Owatonna, build a connection and continue east on the Canadian Pacific (DM&E) route to Rochester. The comparable mileages are 77 miles on HY 52, 92 miles on the former CGW/ HY 56 and 110 miles via Owatonna. These distances suggest that a compromise using the existing abandoned CGW right of way would be the most prudent path forward.

Other Comments

Trackage Rights Access Fees: We do not agree with the assumption in the plan that Trackage/Capacity Rights fees for access to freight railroads would be the same as negotiated for Northstar. MNDOT is proposing to add Intercity Rail Passenger Service, not Commuter Service. Intercity Service falls under the legal purview of the Act of

Congress that created Amtrak. Amtrak has the legal right to run any service over a freight railroad that it desires. No other entity or private operator has that legal right. **A freight railroad cannot refuse to handle the service, as they can for commuter rail. They must negotiate a trackage rights fee in good faith with reasonable compensation** or Amtrak can go before the Surface Transportation Board. **If MNDOT negotiates through Amtrak for passenger train services, the resulting fees will likely be far lower than the Northstar agreement.**

The Rail Freight Traffic Flow Maps in Figures 2.18 and 2.19 are misleading and inaccurate. These maps are based on rail movement sample data. They do not accurately show the route over which the traffic travels. They do accurately show the origin and destination of traffic.

The algorithm used to create the map apparently looks for the shortest rail route rather than the actual route trains travel over. This will mislead the reader into believing that certain lines handle traffic, which they actually do not. We see huge traffic volumes on lines that handle little traffic and no traffic on major main lines that do.

This is especially concerning regarding Oil Traffic flows in Figures 2.31 and 2.32 (which appear to have been removed from the plan). Here the specific route traffic flows over is of great concern to the public.

If the observer is aware of these limitations, the maps do provide a good overview of the major freight traffic flows on the national rail system.

Scheduling of Public Meetings about the Plan: **We are concerned that the timing of Public Meetings about the Plan is inconvenient for a majority of the public.** Many meetings are held during the middle of the business day and others are held from 5-7pm. While these are certainly times that are convenient to public officials, most members of the public have jobs that require them to be at work from 8am-5pm. The only people who can attend are retirees and college students. We have noted the high number of these people in attendance. The earliest many could get to such a meeting on our congested roads is 6pm. We have noted the number of people who show up about 6pm, after the presentations are over.

We have made this suggestion before. We sincerely hope that this is just an oversight and would urge MNDOT to only schedule Public meetings starting at 6 or 7pm, when the maximum number of citizens could participate. Alternate meetings for public officials could be scheduled during the day.

Thank you again for this opportunity to participate in the development of the Minnesota State Rail Plan. We would be happy to meet with you to answer any questions about our comments. We are really pleased with the planning process and feel the Priority I routes MNDOT has selected represent the routes with the best potential for developing a successful Minnesota Intercity Passenger Rail network.

Sincerely,

The All Aboard Minnesota Board of Directors

Contact: Robert Moen, Director, 612-240-4407

From: Bruce Anderson <bruce@sustainablecommunitysolutions.com>
Date: January 12, 2015 at 8:55:14 PM CST
To: <Dave.Christianson@state.mn.us>
Cc: <Daniel.Krom@state.mn.us>
Subject: Letter of support for the South Central Inter-City Regional Passenger Rail Project
Reply-To: <bruce@sustainablecommunitysolutions.com>

To the MnDOT Planning Division:

BikeNorthfield supports upgrading the status for Northfield in the 2009 Minnesota Comprehensive Statewide Freight and Passenger Rail Plan from Tier II to the highest priority category, Tier I.

The benefits to bicyclists would include access from Northfield to the extensive and interconnected system of bike trails in the Twin Cities. Southbound service would open Northfield area paved trails, designated off-road areas and the gravel and paved grid based on section lines that cover our region. With a rail corridor continuing south to Faribault and Owatonna as well as east to Rochester these benefits both directions would be expanded dramatically linking urban dwellers to the growing trail system famous for its rural charm.

We strongly encourage MnDOT to support immediate elevation from Tier II to Tier I in the State Rail Plan for restored regional passenger rail service from south central Minnesota on existing rail lines through Northfield.

BikeNorthfield Steering Committee, unanimously adopted 12/18/14
Signed Bruce Anderson, Chairman

Central Minnesota Inter-City Regional Passenger Rail Initiative

March 4, 2015

TO:

Charles Zelle, Commissioner, Minnesota Department of Transportation
395 John Ireland Boulevard, Mailstop 100, St. Paul, MN 55155-1899

cc: Dave Christianson, Project Manager, Minnesota State Rail Plan, MN Department of Transportation, 395 John Ireland Blvd., Mailstop 480 Saint Paul, MN 55155-1899

cc: Dan Krom, Passenger Rail Director, Minnesota Department of Transportation,
395 John Ireland Blvd., Mailstop 480 Saint Paul, MN 55155-1899

Dear Commissioner Zelle:

We are writing in support of MN Dot's designation the central Minnesota rail corridor as a Phase One Project in the 2015 State Rail Plan, and to encourage MN DOT's study and potential development of inter-city regional passenger rail service between south central Minnesota and the Twin Cities on existing rail line through Northfield.



We are pleased the central Minnesota rail corridor presented sufficient merit to warrant study as a Phase One project.

As freight rail volume increases, and inter-city regional passenger rail is studied and planned, we hope that you will consider ways to keep communities safe and provide continued access for commercial and residential property owners either side of rail lines. The Northfield-Dundas-Bridgewater area, for example, has only one off-grade rail crossing – on the northern edge of Northfield. Please add an off-grade rail crossing on the south side of Dundas at CSAH 1 and crossing arms on township road intersections with rail to your list of safety needs.

Respectfully,

Bridgewater Township Planning Commission

Bridgewater Township Board of Supervisors

Carleton College

One North College Street
Northfield, Minnesota 55057

Frederick A. Rogers
Vice President and Treasurer

507-222-5411

January 14, 2015

Dave Christianson
MnDOT Passenger Rail (Mail Stop 480)
395 John Ireland Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Mr. Christianson:

On behalf of Carleton College, I want to voice our strong support for restoring intercity regional passenger rail service from south central Minnesota to the Twin Cities on existing rail lines through Northfield. We firmly believe this project presents sufficient merit to warrant serious study for possible development in the next five years.

The 2009 Minnesota Comprehensive Statewide Freight and Passenger Rail Plan identifies the Northfield-Metropolitan corridor for Tier II development. Elevation of rail service on one of the existing rail lines connecting Northfield to the Twin Cities to Tier One Status for purposes of an evaluative preliminary study is more than justified by the forecasted levels of usage, the apparent technical and financial feasibility of this project in comparison to other proposed passenger rail projects, and the enthusiastic support of regional stakeholders.

Carleton benefits from its geographic proximity to the Twin Cities metropolitan area in a number of important ways; including enhanced **educational opportunities** available to our students by access to research labs, hospitals for volunteer opportunities, museums and performing arts groups. Businesses and not-for-profits in the Twin Cities area provide internship opportunities for our students, and someday jobs for our graduates!

Proximity to and connections with the Twin Cities—and Rochester—are invaluable in **helping us attract and retain top academic talent**. We recruit faculty and senior staff nationally and internationally—our success hinges in no small part on the sophistication and vibrancy of the Twin Cities and easy access between the metro area and Northfield. While many faculty and staff choose to live in Northfield, others who are drawn to a more urban lifestyle want to live in or closer to Minneapolis or St. Paul.

Proximity leads our faculty to think and act regionally in their research (with other colleges and universities in the state), in their professional networking, and in their service and volunteer work. Additionally, better connectivity to Northfield allows more people to experience what our College has to offer the state, both in terms of employment opportunities and as a cultural and intellectual hub. In

short, the metro region benefits Carleton and the College benefits the region, and improved transit options only makes these benefits available to more people.

We urge MnDOT to elevate this project to Tier One status, and ask MnDOT to commence a study of this route as part of the state's rail planning process.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Fred Rogers", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Fred Rogers
Vice President and Treasurer
Carleton College



A united voice for transit riders, bicyclists, and pedestrians in Eau Claire & neighboring counties of West Central Wisconsin

Chippewa Valley Transit Alliance, Inc., P.O. Box 524, Eau Claire, WI 54702 – www.chippewavalleytransitalliance.com

“Letter of Comment on the 2015 MN State Rail Plan”

March 9th, 2015
Commissioner Charles Zelle
MN Department of Transportation
395 John Ireland Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55155

Via Emails to: Charles Zelle, Dan Krom, Dave Christianson

Dear Commissioner Zelle,

The Chippewa Valley Transit Alliance based in Eau Claire, Wisconsin was pleased to learn that the MN Department of Transportation recently included Eau Claire in the 2015 MN State Rail Plan update and has listed Eau Claire as part of a Phase 1 Corridor. This is a milestone marker for Eau Claire and the Chippewa Valley of West Central Wisconsin. This gives significant weight to the fact that Eau Claire is a regional economic center for West Central Wisconsin and is a viable regional connection with the Twin Cities.

The Chippewa Valley Transit Alliance advocates improvements to public transportation and we support the proposal of adding conventional (79 mph) regional passenger rail service between Minneapolis/St. Paul and Eau Claire. Public support for passenger rail service in the Eau Claire area runs strong. Those numbers were validated by the fact that Eau Claire had the highest turn out for the two public open houses that were held by the MN Department of Transportation last November and this past February. This strong showing reinforces the fact that people want choices when it comes to public transportation and this is a step in the right direction. Unfortunately, political support for expanded passenger rail service in Wisconsin is not in sync with the growing public demand and interest in passenger rail. There is a disconnection here.

Given the current negative political environment that exists around passenger rail in Wisconsin, expanding passenger rail service from the Twin Cities over to Eau Claire will prove challenging due to limited Wisconsin state tax dollars that might be available for funding the service on this route which runs mainly in Wisconsin.

The West Central Wisconsin Rail Coalition, a nonprofit organization based in Eau Claire, Wisconsin is working to promote passenger rail service between Eau Claire and Minneapolis/St. Paul through the use of a public/private partnership. This may be the most effective way to implement conventional passenger rail service from the Twin Cities to Eau Claire with MnDOT, WisDOT and the private sectors all involved.

(continued on page 2)



March 4, 2015

Mr. Dave Christianson
Project Manager
Office of Freight and Commercial Vehicle Operations
Minnesota Department of Transportation
395 John Ireland Boulevard
St. Paul, MN 55155

Greetings Mr. Christianson,

The purpose of this letter is to voice my support for the inclusion of the Minnesota Valley Regional Rail Authority's improvement plan for the Minnesota Prairie Line Railroad in the 2015 State Rail Plan.

As the Mayor of Arlington, I recognize that access to safe, reliable and economical freight rail service is vital to the economic vitality of our city and the county, region, and state. Arlington tax payers have invested in the improvement of the Minnesota Prairie Line Railroad in our community and are witnessing advances in both use of the line and public safety.

I encourage and endorse continued investment by the State of Minnesota leading to completion of improvements to the MPLR. I trust communities west of Arlington on the MPLR will see similar boosts in economic development and public safety as the railway is improved.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at your earliest convenience at (507)964-2378. Thank you in advance for your consideration and attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Richard Nagel'.

Richard Nagel
Mayor
City of Arlington

City of Austin
500 Fourth Avenue NE
Austin, Minnesota 55912-3773



Phone: 507-437-9940
Fax: 507-434-7197
www.ci.austin.mn.us

March 3, 2015


Mr. Charles Zelle
Commissioner, Minnesota Department of Transportation
395 John Ireland Boulevard, Mailstop 100
St. Paul, MN 55155-1899

Dear Commissioner Zelle:

We are writing to express support for the Phase One designation for inter-city regional rail corridor from south central Minnesota to the Twin Cities on existing rail lines through Northfield. We see the potential development of passenger service on the central (I-35) rail corridor as an important complement to the proposed Zip Rail to the Twin Cities from Rochester. We are particularly interested in the potential of the central Minnesota line for the potential inter-state connections it would afford by virtue of its intersection with three of Amtrak's most highly travelled inter-state routes, as the rail line continues on the Union Pacific "spine line" into Iowa and Kansas. 32 million passengers travelled on those long-distance Amtrak routes in 2014 alone. Development of the central Minnesota corridor for passenger service would make it possible for that ridership to enter Minnesota from the south, without having to first travel by way of Minot or Milwaukee. We encourage your study of this possibility.

We are aware that our neighbors Owatonna, Albert Lea and Steele County among others, have written official letters in support of the Phase One designation for the central Minnesota corridor, and we join them in encouraging you pursue the corridor as an important part of an inter-city regional passenger network for our State.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Mayor Thomas Stiehm
The City of Austin, Minnesota

cc: Dave Christianson, Project Manager, Minnesota State Rail Plan, MN Department of Transportation, 395 John Ireland Blvd , Mailstop 480 Saint Paul, MN 55155-1899

cc: Dan Krom, Passenger Rail Director, Minnesota Department of Transportation,
395 John Ireland Blvd , Mailstop 480 Saint Paul, MN 55155-1899



January 27, 2015

Charles Zelle, Commissioner
Minnesota Department of Transportation
395 John Ireland Blvd
Mailstop 100
Saint Paul, MN 55155-1899

Re: South Central Minnesota Inter-City Regional Passenger Rail

Dear Commissioner Zelle:

Faribault has participated in discussions with MnDOT staff and other local government officials in our region to explore the possibility of restoring inter-city regional passenger rail service from south central Minnesota to the Twin Cities. From what we have learned in those discussions and presentations, it appears that an evaluative study of the feasibility of the proposed inter-city regional passenger rail service is warranted.

It is our understanding that the 2009 Minnesota Comprehensive Statewide Freight and Passenger Rail Plan has identified the Northfield – Metropolitan corridor for Tier II development. The Faribault City Council, along with the Rice County Board of Commissioners, respectfully requests that MnDOT elevate this project to Tier I status as part of the revised Rail Plan for the State of Minnesota.

Respectfully,

John R. Jasinski
Mayor

Brian J. Anderson
City Administrator

cc: Dave Christianson, Project Manager, Minnesota State Rail Plan, Minnesota Department of Transportation, 395 John Ireland Blvd, Mailstop 480, Saint Paul, MN 55155-1899

Dan Krom, Director of Intercity Passenger Rail Transportation Forum, Minnesota Department of Transportation, Passenger Rail Office, 395 John Ireland Blvd, Mailstop 480, Saint Paul, MN 55155-1899



City of Farmington
430 Third Street
Farmington, Minnesota
651.280.6800 • Fax 651.280.6899
www.ci.farmington.mn.us

December 16, 2014

Minnesota Department of Transportation
Dave Christianson, Project Manager
395 John Ireland Boulevard
St. Paul, MN 55155-1899

Dear Mr. Christianson,

The City of Farmington has been participating in discussions with our neighboring communities to explore a common interest in pursuing restored inter-city regional passenger rail service from south central Minnesota to the Twin Cities on existing rail lines.

The Farmington City Council supports restored intercity regional passenger rail service between south central Minnesota communities and the metropolitan area, as well as the potential inter-state rail connections that our particular rail line would open for Minnesotans by virtue of the intersection of our line with three of Amtrak's most heavily trafficked inter-state lines, immediately to the south of us in Kansas City and Des Moines. We feel strongly that this project presents sufficient merit as to warrant serious study for possible development in the next five years.

The 2009 Minnesota Comprehensive Statewide Freight and Passenger Rail Plan identifies the Northfield – Metropolitan corridor for Tier II development. Elevation of rail service on one of the existing rail lines connecting Northfield to the Twin Cities to Tier One Status for purposes of an evaluative preliminary study is more than justified by the forecasted levels of usage, the apparent technical and financial feasibility of this project in comparison to other proposed passenger rail projects and the support of the affected communities.

We strongly encourage MnDOT to elevate restored regional inter-city passenger rail service from south central Minnesota on existing rail lines through Northfield/Twin Cities to Tier One status in the State's revised rail plan, and urge MnDOT to commence an evaluative study of that routing as part of your statewide rail planning.

Best wishes,

Todd Larson
Mayor

Minnesota Comprehensive Statewide Freight and Passenger Rail Plan – City of Minneapolis Comments - March 10, 2015

General Comments

- Overall this is a very good plan that clearly outlines the needs for both the freight rail and passenger rail systems in Minnesota. The City of Minneapolis looks forward to working with regional project partners to advance projects that improve safety, mobility, and commerce for its residents and businesses.

Freight Rail Comments

- The plan has done a good job of assessing both capacity needs and track quality needs throughout the state freight railway system. The City of Minneapolis has a number of freight corridors within city limits where railroads haul hazardous materials. Maintaining track quality is one of the best ways to prevent a railroad derailment. In addition to track quality goals, the city would like to see a MnDOT goal with regard to hiring additional track inspectors to keep up with inspecting track given the increase in volume of material hauled.
- Minneapolis supports the use of positive train control and other modern railroad technologies to prevent derailments, especially on hazardous material routes. All new track work should include the latest signal and coordination technology.
- There needs to be more discussion on local emergency preparedness needs to react to derailments. The plan does a good job recognizing the need to improve or remove at-grade rail crossings, but additional concerns have been raised. The plan could suggest that the state work with individual municipalities with hazardous material routes to develop disaster plans that examine response times, evacuation areas, foam supply, detour routes, and environmental mitigation/prevention strategies. The city supports the state's efforts to require railroads to provide hazardous cargo information. The city also appreciates the work that has been done to improve rail industry rolling stock, especially with oil and ethanol tankers.
- With regard to the Minneapolis Junction project identified on page 4-17, the City of Minneapolis is concerned with the need for “many business” to be “purchased and leveled” in order to facilitate a 2nd track. The city wants to minimize property and business loss and would like to be involved with developing the project scope when this project is programmed. It is unclear whether the \$33 million estimate includes work for the Nicollet Island railroad bridges over the Mississippi River and parallel channel. Improving those bridges could have benefit to Northstar Commuter Rail, High Speed Rail to Chicago, and the NLX project. The Minneapolis Bicycle Master Plan also recognizes the need for a side trail on these bridges to extend the Cedar Lake Trail into Northeast Minneapolis.
- The City of Minneapolis would like to be part of the review process if the CP/BNSF Crystal wye project advances. There could be access impacts and response time impacts to properties along the BNSF route within Minneapolis. There could also be impacts to the Met Council's Blue Line Extension project, which the City of Minneapolis and Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board are active partners.
- On Page 4-33 Minneapolis junction is shown as a CP rail project. Shouldn't this be BNSF?

MORTON

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Phone: (507) 697-6912 Fax: (507) 697-6118

E-Mail: mortoncityhall@mchsi.com

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February 25, 2015

Dave Christianson, Project Manager
Office of Freight and Commercial Vehicle Operations
Minnesota Department of Transportation
395 John Ireland Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55155


Re: Rail Support, MN State Rail Plan 2015

Dear Mr. Christianson:

The City of Morton recognizes that safe, reliable and economical freight rail service is vital to the economic vitality of our community, the surrounding area and its businesses. Because of the rehabilitation of the rail line, businesses are here in our community that didn't exist just a few years ago. Other businesses in our community are looking at use of the rail for transporting their products; whereas a few years ago, this was not an option. The increase in the tax base from our growing businesses results in lower taxes for everyone. A healthy and growing industry will result in new, good paying jobs for our citizens, increased revenue for our Main Street businesses and stimulation of the local economy.

We strongly encourage the state to continue funding restoration of the rail from Winthrop to Hanley Falls so that we can continue to experience the growth and vitality that a safe and reliable railroad will bring and help our community prosper.

Sincerely,



Ben Mammen, Mayor
City of Morton



December 9, 2014

Dave Christianson
MnDOT Passenger Rail (Mail Stop 480)
395 John Ireland Boulevard
St. Paul, Minnesota 55155

Dear Mr. Christianson,

Representatives of the Northfield City Council have met with the leaders of other communities in our region to explore a common interest in pursuing restored inter-city regional passenger rail service from south central Minnesota to the Twin Cities on existing rail lines through Northfield.

The Northfield City Council supports restored intercity regional passenger rail service between our south central Minnesota communities and the Metropolitan area, as well as the potential inter-state rail connections that our particular rail line would open for Minnesotans by virtue of the intersection of our line with 3 of Amtrak's most heavily trafficked inter-state lines, immediately to the south of us (Kansas City and Des Moines). We feel strongly that this project presents sufficient merit as to warrant serious study for possible development in the next five years.

The 2009 Minnesota Comprehensive Statewide Freight and Passenger Rail Plan identifies the Northfield – Metropolitan corridor for Tier II development. Elevation of rail service on one of the existing rail lines connecting Northfield to the Twin Cities to Tier One status for purposes of an evaluative preliminary study is more than justified by the forecasted levels of usage, the apparent technical and financial feasibility of this project in comparison to other proposed passenger rail projects, and the enthusiastic support of the undersigned affected communities.

We strongly encourage MnDOT to elevate restored regional inter-city passenger rail service from south central Minnesota on existing rail lines through Northfield to Tier One status in the State's revised Rail Plan, and urge MnDOT to commence an evaluative study of that routing as part of your statewide rail planning.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dana Graham". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

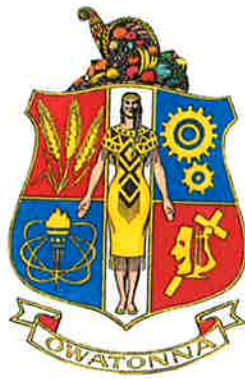
Dana Graham
Mayor of Northfield

THE CITY OF

Thomas A. Kuntz, Mayor

January 23, 2015

Charles Zelle, Commissioner
Minnesota Department of Transportation
395 John Ireland Blvd , Mailstop 100
St. Paul, MN 55155-1899



OWATONNA

540 West Hills Circle
Owatonna, MN 55060-4794
Ph. (507) 774-7342
FAX: (507) 444-4394
CELL: 507-456-5080
Email: mayor@ci.owatonna.mn.us

Dear Commissioner Zelle:

I am writing to encourage MnDOT to move to Tier One status in the State's revised Rail Plan, restoration of inter-city regional passenger rail service between south central Minnesota and the Twin Cities on existing rail lines through Northfield. This Letter of Support was approved during the January 20, 2015 Council Meeting to urge MnDot to commence an evaluative study of our rail corridor, including the inter-state connections that our corridor would restore to our State and communities, as part of your statewide rail planning.

Representatives of Owatonna met with elected officials and appointed leaders in our region to explore a common interest in pursuing restored inter-city regional passenger rail service from south central Minnesota to the Twin Cities on existing rail lines through Northfield. We believe this project presents sufficient merit to our region and state to warrant serious study for possible development in the near future. This project would be beneficial to the economic development of our city and other cities within this region. We also recognize the potential inter-state rail connections this would open for Minnesotans by virtue of the intersection with three of Amtrak's most heavily trafficked inter-state lines immediately to the south of us (particularly the routes that connect through Kansas City and Des Moines).

The 2009 Minnesota Comprehensive Statewide Freight and Passenger Rail Plan identifies the Northfield – Metropolitan corridor for Tier II development. Elevation of rail service on one of the existing rail lines connecting Northfield to the Twin Cities to Tier One Status for purposes of an evaluative preliminary study is more than justified by the forecasted levels of usage, the apparent technical and financial feasibility of this project in comparison to other proposed passenger rail projects, and the enthusiastic support of communities and stakeholders in our region.

We strongly encourage MnDOT to elevate restored regional inter-city passenger rail service from south central Minnesota to the Twin Cities metropolitan area, to Tier One status in the State's revised Rail Plan, and to commence an evaluative study of that alignment as part of your statewide rail planning.

Respectfully,

Thomas A. Kuntz, Mayor

CC: Dave Christianson, Project Manager, Minnesota State Rail Plan, Minnesota Department of Transportation

Dan Krom, Passenger Rail Director, Minnesota Department of Transportation

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City Council

February 2, 2015

Commissioner Charles Zelle
Minnesota Department of Transportation
395 John Ireland Boulevard, Mailstop 100
St. Paul, MN 55155-1899

MAYOR
DEBBIE GOETTEL

CITY COUNCIL
PAT ELLIOTT
TOM FITZHENRY
EDWINA GARCIA
MICHAEL HOWARD

CITY MANAGER
STEVEN L. DEVICH

Subject: South Central Minnesota Inter-City Regional Passenger Rail Initiative

Dear Commissioner Zelle:

The Mayor and City Council of Richfield are writing to encourage MnDOT to move restored inter-city regional passenger rail service between south central Minnesota and the Twin Cities on existing rail lines through Northfield, to Tier One status in the State's revised Rail Plan. We urge MnDOT to commence an evaluative study of our rail corridor, including the inter-state connections that this line would restore to our State and communities.

We feel strongly that this project presents sufficient merit to our region and State to warrant serious study for possible development in the near future. We see this project as beneficial to the economic development of our city and region. We also recognize the potential inter-state rail connections that our particular rail line would open for Minnesotans by virtue of the intersection of our line with three of Amtrak's most heavily trafficked inter-state lines that intersect with our rail line as it continues south to Kansas City and Des Moines.

The 2009 Minnesota Comprehensive Statewide Freight and Passenger Rail Plan identifies the Northfield – Metropolitan corridor for Tier II development. Moving this corridor forward to Tier One Status in the State Rail Plan for purposes of evaluative preliminary study is more than justified by the forecasted levels of usage, and the apparent technical feasibility of two existing rail alignments that serve our region. Importantly, study of restored passenger service between south central Minnesota and the Twin Cities through Northfield is also justified by the financial feasibility of this project as compared with other proposed passenger rail projects in the State, since our project would introduce passenger service on existing rail lines.

Elevating our central Minnesota passenger rail corridor to Tier One Status in the State Rail Plan is warranted by the enthusiastic grass roots support that this project has received from regional stakeholders. Representatives have met with elected and appointed leaders from around our region and we see this project as one of common interest to our communities, region and the State.

The Urban Hometown

February 2, 2015
Page 2

We strongly encourage MnDOT to elevate restored regional inter-city passenger rail service from south central Minnesota to the Twin Cities metropolitan area, to Tier One status in the State's revised Rail Plan, and ask you to commence an evaluative study of that alignment as part of your statewide rail planning.

Respectfully,



Debbie Goettel
Mayor, City of Richfield

cc: **Dave Christianson**, Project Manager, Minnesota State Rail Plan, MN
Department of Transportation
Dan Krom, Passenger Rail Director, Minnesota Department of
Transportation

March 10, 2015

Dave Christianson, Project Manager
Minnesota Department of Transportation
395 John Ireland Blvd, St. Paul, MN 55155-1899

RE: Comment on Draft 2015 State Rail Plan

Dear Mr. Christianson:

Thank-you for the opportunity to comment on the draft of the 2015 State Rail Plan. The City of St. Louis Park's comments on the plan relate to two proposed passenger rail lines identified as Phase 1 Corridors, specifically identified as the *Twin Cities to Albert Lea (via Northfield)* and the *Twin Cities to Mankato*. It is my understanding from the draft plan that these corridors are proposed for the standard 79 mph rail service and would include the use of the CP/MN&S subdivision in St. Louis Park also known as the Dan Patch line.

The City of St Louis Park has been on record as opposing the study of passenger rail on the CP/MN&S/Dan Patch due to significant concerns about the impact such a line/service would have on the St. Louis Park community. This opposition continues for a variety of reasons, not the least of which include major concerns about significant conflicts and safety issues that would be created on adjacent land uses such as single family homes and schools.

I would also note that state statute prohibits the study of passenger rail on the Dan Patch. More specifically the statute states the following:

Sec. 85. [DAN PATCH COMMUTER RAIL LINE; PROHIBITIONS.]

Subdivision 1. [DEFINITION.] For purposes of this section, "Dan Patch commuter rail line" means the commuter rail line between Northfield and Minneapolis identified in the metropolitan council's transit 2020 master plan as the Dan Patch line.

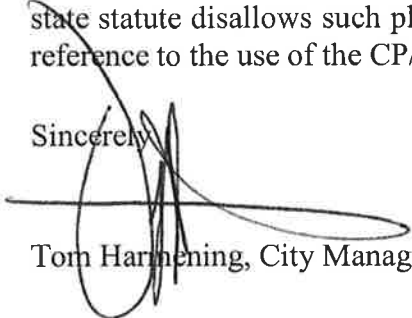
Subd. 2. [METROPOLITAN COUNCIL; PROHIBITIONS.] The metropolitan council must not take any action or spend any money for study, planning, preliminary engineering, final design, or construction for the Dan Patch commuter rail line. The council must remove all references, other than references for historical purposes, to the Dan Patch commuter rail line from any future revisions to the council's transportation development guide and the council's regional transit master plan.

Subd. 3. [COMMISSIONER OF TRANSPORTATION.] The commissioner of transportation must not expend any money for study, planning, preliminary engineering, final design, or construction for the Dan Patch commuter rail line. The commissioner must remove all references, other than references for historical purposes, to the Dan Patch commuter rail line from any future revisions to the state transportation plan and the commissioner's commuter rail system plan.

As noted above, the statute specifically states that any reference to the Dan Patch line must be removed from MnDOT's state transportation plan and the commissioner's commuter rail plan. It is my understanding that some people have concluded that the statute does not apply as it refers to "commuter rail" and that the proposed Phase 1 lines in question are "intercity passenger rail". Such a conclusion is a distinction without a difference as both commuter rail and intercity passenger rail involve carrying passengers in rail cars.

In summary – the City of St. Louis Park opposes the study of passenger rail, whether it is commuter rail or intercity passenger rail, on the CP/MN&S/Dan Patch. We further assert that state statute disallows such planning and study to occur and, in accordance with the statute, any reference to the use of the CP/MN&S for passenger rail should be removed from the draft plan.

Sincerely,



Tom Hammening, City Manager

cc: St. Louis Park Mayor and City Council
Senator Latz
Rep. Youakim
Rep. Winkler
Tom Scott, City Attorney



CITY OF SAINT PAUL
Mayor Christopher B. Coleman

390 City Hall
15 West Kellogg Boulevard

Telephone: 651-266-8510
Facsimile: 651-228-8521

January 26, 2015

Mr. Charles Zelle
Commissioner
Minnesota Department of Transportation
395 John Ireland Boulevard, MS 100
Saint Paul, MN 55155-1899

Dear Commissioner Zelle:

I understand that the South Central Minnesota Intercity Regional Passenger Rail Project is studying the possibility of a passenger rail connection between South Central Minnesota and the Twin Cities through the City of Northfield. On behalf of the City of Saint Paul, I would like to weigh in to support such an effort - and its connection to the Union Depot.

The strength of Minnesota's economy has always—from its earliest days depended on the strength of its transportation systems. That is as true today as it has ever been. And it is not just moving raw materials or finished goods to market. Increasingly, people are looking for access to employment or educational opportunities that may be more than 50 miles away. The very definition of labor-shed has extended far beyond where we might have once imagined.

Saint Paul's Union Depot has the capacity to accommodate additional passenger rail service. And the economic benefits of linking South Central Minnesota communities with the Twin Cities are almost limitless. Therefore, we support elevating the Northfield to Twin Cities passenger rail corridor to Tier 1 status in the *Minnesota Comprehensive Statewide Freight and Passenger Rail Plan*.

Thank you for your consideration. Please don't hesitate to call Nancy Homans of my staff (nancy.homans@ci.stpaul.mn.us) if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Christopher B. Coleman
Mayor

cc: Saint Paul City Councilmembers
Rafael Ortega, Ramsey County Regional Rail Authority
Dave Christianson, MnDOT
Dan Krom, MnDOT
Representative David Bly
Northfield Councilmember Suzie Nakasian



City Offices

6000 McColl Drive, Savage, MN 55378-1800 Telephone: 952-882-2660 Fax: 952-882-2656

December 15, 2014

Mr. Dave Christianson, Project Manager
Office of Freight & Commercial Vehicle Operations
Mail Stop 470
395 John Ireland Boulevard
St. Paul, MN 55155

Re: Minnesota Comprehensive Statewide Freight and Passenger Rail Plan

Dear Mr. Christianson:

The City of Savage in cooperation with a number of government entities have been meeting in an effort to pursue the restoration of inter-city regional passenger rail service from south central Minnesota to the Twin Cities along existing rail corridors through Northfield. Several alignments for this service between the core cities are presently identified within the Minnesota Comprehensive Statewide Freight and Passenger Rail Plan. Unfortunately, the current plan identifies these alignments within the Tier II category.

On behalf of the City of Savage, I would respectfully request that the Minnesota Comprehensive Statewide Freight and Passenger Rail Plan be revised to elevate the status of these alignment options from Tier II to Tier I status in conjunction with the current plan revisions being developed. Elevation of regional rail service along either of the alignments connecting Mpls./St. Paul to Northfield and beyond is more than justified by the forecasted levels of usage and the apparent technical and financial feasibility of this project in comparison to other proposed passenger rail projects currently being considered within the Tier I category.

The City of Savage also supports retaining within the Tier I category the passenger rail corridor connection between St. Paul and Mankato. Savage sits at the critical juncture of two practical and feasible passenger rail service alignments. We firmly believe that each of these corridors present sufficient merit to warrant serious study for possible development within the next five years.

Sincerely,

Janet Williams
Mayor, City of Savage

Cc: State Sen. Dan Hall
State Sen. Kevin Dahle
State Representative Drew Christianson
State Representative David Bly
Jon Ulrich, Scott County Commissioner
Dan Krom, MnDot Passenger Rail Project Manager



February 4, 2015

Commissioner Charles Zelle
Minnesota Department of Transportation
395 John Ireland Boulevard, Mailstop 100,
St. Paul, MN 55155-1899

Dear Commissioner Zelle:

On behalf of the City of Shakopee, I am writing to encourage MnDOT to move restored inter-city regional passenger rail service between south central Minnesota and the Twin Cities, on existing rail lines through Northfield, to Tier One status in the State's 2015 revised Rail Plan. Along with elected and appointed leaders from around our region, we see this project as one of common interest to our communities, region and State.

The 2010 Minnesota Comprehensive Statewide Freight and Passenger Rail Plan identified the Northfield – Metropolitan corridor for Tier Two development. We believe the forecasted levels of usage, apparent technical feasibility and enthusiastic grassroots support for service in this corridor warrant moving it to Tier One status for the purpose of preliminary study. Furthermore, this project is more financially feasible than other proposed projects in the state as it would introduce passenger rail service on existing rail lines.

We feel strongly that this project presents sufficient merit to our region and State to warrant Tier One status and see it as beneficial to the economic development and growth of our city and region. We also recognize the potential inter-state rail connections that this particular rail line would open for Minnesotans by virtue of its intersection with three of Amtrak's most heavily trafficked inter-state lines.

We strongly encourage MnDOT to elevate restored regional inter-city passenger rail service from south central Minnesota to the Twin Cities metropolitan area, to Tier One status in the State's 2015 revised Rail Plan, and ask you to commence an evaluative study of the alignment as part of your statewide rail planning.

Sincerely,

Mayor Brad Tabke

cc: ✓ Dave Christianson, Project Manager, Minnesota State Rail Plan
Dan Krom, Passenger Rail Director, Minnesota Department of Transportation

COMMUNITY PRIDE SINCE 1857

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CITY OF SLEEPY EYE

MINNESOTA

200 Main Street East
Sleepy Eye MN. 56085



Mark D. Kober
City Manager

Ph (507) 794-3731
Fx (507) 794-5799

E-mail markk@sleepyeyetel.net

3-3-15

Charles Zelle, Commissioner, Minnesota Department of Transportation
395 John Ireland Boulevard, Mailstop 100, St. Paul, MN 55155-1899

cc: Dave Christianson, Project Manager, Minnesota State Rail Plan, MN Department of Transportation,
395 John Ireland Blvd , Mailstop 480 Saint Paul, MN 55155-1899

cc: Dan Krom, Passenger Rail Director, Minnesota Department of Transportation,
395 John Ireland Blvd , Mailstop 480 Saint Paul, MN 55155-1899

Dear Commissioner Zelle:

We are writing in support of your designation of the central Minnesota rail corridor between south central Minnesota and the Twin Cities on existing rail line through Northfield as a Phase One project in the 2015 State Rail Plan, and to ask you to similarly designate the CP (formerly the DM&E) and IM&E rail lines for potential passenger rail service, as a rail corridor in itself, or as a subsidiary line one or more of the corridors proposed to connect to or through southern Minnesota. We have long sought passenger excursion service on the line through Sleepy Eye.

The central Minnesota rail corridor has sufficient merit to warrant study as a Phase One project. We see this project as beneficial to the economic development of our State, and we recognize the wisdom and cost efficiency of adding passenger service to existing lines as compared to the cost of projects that require the purchase of right of way. We think the study of the central Minnesota line makes sense.

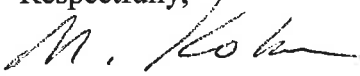
In order for cities in the southern tier of the State to have the maximum opportunity to benefit from the proposed statewide passenger rail network, we ask you to consider designating the east west CP and IM&E rail lines for potential passenger rail service. Five north-south rail corridors are currently proposed that connect to the southern tier of the State; unfortunately they run parallel to one another. Amending the Rail Plan to include the possibility of east-west passenger service on the CP/IM&E will make it possible for cities in the south of Minnesota to access the proposed passenger network, and will in turn render now parallel lines into one inter-connected, transit matrix for our constituents. The addition of this one east west line will exponentially increase the number of origin-destination pairs that result from the State's investment in this statewide rail system.

Finally, we are also enthusiastic about the potential inter-state ridership that the central UP rail line affords by virtue its intersection with Amtrak's popular long-distance routes south of the STATE, and we

encourage you to explore the possibility of opening this passenger rail gateway into Minnesota from the south.

With you, we recognize that Minnesota's ability to compete in a global economy will require our commitment to rail as well as highway infrastructure. We want to thank you again for your commitment to the completion of Highway 14, and to your pursuit of a strong and effective multi-modal transportation system for Minnesota's future. It is certainly in the interest of Sleepy Eye to be part of this system of passenger opportunities.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. Kober". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a light blue horizontal line.

Mark D. Kober
City Manager

CITY OF SPRINGFIELD

2 EAST CENTRAL STREET, SPRINGFIELD, MINNESOTA 56087

TEL. 507-723-3500 Fax 507-723-6210



March 6, 2015

Commissioner Charles Zelle
Minnesota Department of Transportation
395 John Ireland Boulevard, Mailstop 100
St. Paul, MN 55155-1899

Dear Commissioner Zelle:

On behalf of the City of Springfield, I am writing in support of your designation of the central Minnesota rail corridor between south central Minnesota and the Twin Cities on existing rail line through Northfield as a Phase One project in the 2015 State Rail Plan. I also ask you to similarly designate the CP (formerly the DM&E) and IM&E rail lines for potential passenger rail service, as a rail corridor in itself, or as a subsidiary line one or more of the corridors proposed to connect to or through southern Minnesota. It is certainly in the interest of Springfield to be part of this system of passenger opportunities.

In order for cities in the southern tier of the State to have the maximum opportunity to benefit from the proposed statewide passenger rail network, I ask you to consider designating the east west CP and IM&E rail lines for potential passenger rail service. Five north-south rail corridors are currently proposed that connect to the southern tier of the State. Unfortunately, they run parallel to one another. Amending the Rail Plan to include the possibility of east-west passenger service on the CP/IM&E will make it possible for cities in southern Minnesota to access the proposed passenger network, and will in turn render now parallel lines into one inter-connected, transit matrix for our constituents. The addition of this one east west line will exponentially increase the number of origin-destination pairs that result from the State's investment in this statewide rail system.

Finally, we are also enthusiastic about the potential inter-state ridership that the North-South central Minnesota rail corridor affords by virtue its intersection with Amtrak's popular long-distance routes south of the State, and we encourage you to explore the possibility of opening this passenger rail gateway into Minnesota from the south.

Minnesota's ability to compete in a global economy will require commitment to rail as well as highway infrastructure. Thank you again for your commitment to the completion of Highway 14, and to your pursuit of a strong and effective multi-modal transportation system for Minnesota's future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Matt Skaret". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Matt Skaret
City Manager

Cc: Dave Christianson, Project Manager, Minnesota State Rail Plan, Dan Krom, Passenger Rail Director, Minnesota State Rail Plan



336 MORGAN STREET
TRACY, MN 56175
PHONE (507) 629-5528
FAX (507) 629-5530

09 March, 2015

Charles Zelle, Commissioner
Minnesota Department of Transportation
395 John Ireland Boulevard, Mailstop 100
St. Paul, MN 55155-1899

Dear Commissioner Zelle:

We are writing in support of your designation of the central Minnesota rail corridor between south central Minnesota and the Twin Cities on existing rail line through Northfield as a Phase One project in the 2015 State Rail Plan, and to ask you to similarly designate the CP (formerly the DM&E) and IM&E rail lines for potential passenger rail service, as a rail corridor in itself, or as a subsidiary line one or more of the corridors proposed to connect to or through southern Minnesota. We have long sought passenger excursion service on the line through Tracy.

The central Minnesota rail corridor has sufficient merit to warrant study as a Phase One project. We see this project as beneficial to the economic development of our State, and we recognize the wisdom and cost efficiency of adding passenger service to existing lines as compared to the cost of projects that require the purchase of right of way. We think the study of the central Minnesota line makes sense.

In order for cities in the southern tier of the State to have the maximum opportunity to benefit from the proposed statewide passenger rail network, we ask you to consider designating the east west CP and IM&E rail lines for potential passenger rail service. Five north-south rail corridors are currently proposed that connect to the southern tier of the State; unfortunately they run parallel to one another. Amending the Rail Plan to include the possibility of east-west passenger service on the CP/IM&E will make it possible for cities in the south of Minnesota to access the proposed passenger network, and will in turn render now parallel lines into one inter-connected, transit matrix for our constituents. The addition of this one east west line will exponentially increase the number of origin-destination pairs that result from the State's investment in this statewide rail system.

Finally, we are also enthusiastic about the potential inter-state ridership that the central UP rail line affords by virtue its intersection with Amtrak's popular long-distance routes south of the

"The City of Tracy is an equal opportunity provider and employer"



Dear Commissioner Zelle:

At the February 17th Waseca City Council meeting, the City Council voted to encourage MnDOT to move restored inter-city regional passenger rail service between south central Minnesota and the Twin Cities on existing rail lines through Northfield, to Tier One status in the State's revised Rail Plan. The City Council urges MnDOT to commence an evaluative study of the rail corridor, including the inter-state connections that this line would restore to our State and communities.

The Council feels that this project merits serious study for possible development in the near future and sees this project as beneficial to the economic development of our city and region. The Council also recognizes the potential inter-state rail connections that this particular rail line would open for Minnesotans by virtue of the intersection of the line with three of Amtrak's most heavily trafficked inter-state lines. These lines would intersect with the proposed rail line as it continues south to Kansas City and Des Moines.

The 2009 Minnesota Comprehensive Statewide Freight and Passenger Rail Plan identifies the Northfield – Metropolitan corridor for Tier II development. Moving this corridor forward to Tier One Status in the State's Rail Plan for purposes of evaluative preliminary study is justified by the forecasted levels of usage, and the apparent technical feasibility of two existing rail alignments that serve our region. Importantly, study of restored passenger service between south central Minnesota and the Twin Cities through Northfield is also justified by the financial feasibility of this project as compared with other proposed passenger rail projects in the State, as this project would introduce passenger service on existing rail lines.

Elevating the central Minnesota passenger rail corridor to Tier One Status in the State Rail Plan is warranted by support this project has received from regional stakeholders. Representatives of the City of Waseca have met with elected and appointed leaders from around our region and we see this project as one of common interest to our communities, region and the State.

The Waseca City Council encourages MnDOT to elevate restored regional inter-city passenger rail service from south central Minnesota to the Twin Cities metropolitan area, to Tier One status in the State's revised Rail Plan. So long as it does not negatively impact any State funding for road and bridge work, and does not divert future funding for road, bridge and other critical infrastructure, we ask you to commence an evaluative study of this alignment as part of your statewide rail planning.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Daniel Lenz'.

Daniel Lenz on behalf of the Waseca City Council
City Manager
City of Waseca, MN



CITY HALL
207 Lafayette Street
P.O. Box 378
Winona, MN 55987-0378
FAX 507/457-8293

DIRECT FAX: (507) 457-8285
E-MAIL: mpeterson@ci.winona.mn.us

March 6, 2015

Charles Zelle, Commissioner
Minnesota Department of Transportation
395 John Ireland Boulevard, Mailstop 100
St. Paul, Minnesota 55155-1899

Dear Commissioner Zelle;

The City of Winona has been and continues to be a strong supporter of both passenger and freight rail service in Minnesota. Both passenger and freight service have been, currently are and their futures are important to Winona and the surrounding community. Winona businesses use freight rail daily to receive and send freight. Winona is the second largest passenger rail Amtrak stop in Minnesota. This passenger service is extremely important to our universities, businesses, residents and tourists who use rail as their transportation.

The State Rail Plan has identified a series of passenger rail projects including a number in of them southern Minnesota. We believe that the passenger rail projects in Southern Minnesota should be inter connected. This can be done by identifying the CP (formally the DM&E) and IM&E freight line as a potential passenger line connecting the passenger rail projects in Southern Minnesota in the State Rail Plan. We believe this designation preserves the possibility of future integrated passenger rail in our area.

I urge your support in preserving the ability to integrate the passenger rail corridors in Southern Minnesota by identifying the CP and IM&E rail lines as potential passenger lines.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark Peterson". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Mark Peterson
Mayor of Winona

Cc: Dave Christianson, Project Manager, Minnesota State Pail Plan
Dan Krom, Passenger Rail Director



Dakota County
Regional Railroad Authority

Dakota County
Administration Center
1590 Highway 55
Hastings, MN 55033

651.438.4418
Fax 651.438.4405
www.co.dakota.mn.us

February 26, 2015

Mr. Dave Christianson
Minnesota Department of Transportation
395 John Ireland Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Mr. Christianson,

On behalf of the Dakota County Regional Railroad Authority (DCRRA), we thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Draft State Rail Plan. This plan produces a comprehensive overview of the present role of rail infrastructure and service in the state and its impact on the state and regional economy, as well as the quality of life for Minnesota residents. This plan also takes initiative on defining and addressing present and future demands on the rail system from increasing freight volumes, critical safety concerns related to the transport of crude oil and other hazardous materials, and a growing market for intercity passenger rail service.

As the State Rail Plan will provide critical guidance to the state, local agencies, operators and commercial interests, we are disappointed in the very limited timeframe to review the Plan in detail and provide substantive feedback that could help shape the final version of the Plan. Although there were efforts to reach out to the general public to provide an understanding of the Plan's purpose and to gain input prior to release of the Plan, the limited timeframe to review the draft Plan and the inability of Mn/DOT to feasibly consider comments prior to the planned adoption process precludes the DCRRA and other agencies from having locally identified concerns and opportunities reflected in the Plan. In addition, the draft Plan contains several unfinished sections and errors that have affected staff's ability to review and comment. While the DCRRA recognizes the time pressures to adopt the Plan, we encourage an extension of the adoption schedule to fully consider comments.

The following sections, categorized by broad topics addressed in the Plan, represent the concerns and comments of the DCRRA:

Safety

The Plan recognizes both ongoing and emerging safety concerns with the operation of rail service within the state. The DCRRA is supportive of the prioritization of safety within the plan, as well as the broad initiatives and specific projects to enhance safety throughout the system.

Specific to Dakota County, the recent and projected increases in total freight volumes, and particularly crude oil volumes, on the Union Pacific Albert Lea subdivision raises



concerns on crossing safety in areas with established and projected high population densities and auto traffic volumes. Dakota County is expected to gain approximately 100,000 additional residents in the next 15 years. Communities along the Albert Lea subdivision, including Rosemount, Farmington and Empire Township are expected to absorb a large portion of this growth and will increase the amount of developed land adjacent to these lines and the volumes of traffic at at-grade track crossings. Evaluation of existing crossings and increased projected auto traffic volumes on this section for appropriate safety improvements, including the potential for grade separation, is recommended.

Dakota County staff has also identified a number of specific railroad crossings with the County highway system that should be considered for new or improved crossing systems:

- County Road 88, east of Divers Path in Randolph
- County Road 88, east of TH 56 in Randolph
- CSAH 23, north of 265th Street in Eureka Township
- 117th St. (future CSAH 32), west of TH 52 in Inver Grove Heights
- CSAH 42 at TH 3. Traffic volumes on CSAH 42 within the immediate area of TH3 and the Union Pacific railroad are expected to increase by 51% to west of TH3, and by 114% to the east of TH 3 by 2030.

The DCRRA also supports Mn/DOT's recognition of the urgent need to prioritize the upgrade of warning systems at crossings where increased volumes of crude oil are expected in the coming decades.

Capacity

The Plan's review of current and projected freight traffic and the reliance of state and regional economic activity on the state's rail system build a strong case to pursue improvements that can manage the increases in traffic and allow for efficient operation at major junctions. The DCRRA supports the Plan's recognition of the need for expanded freight capacity statewide, particularly on major corridors extending to outside the Midwest. However, projects to improve the capacity of rail corridors will likely impact County residents and businesses through both construction phases and resulting higher operating volumes. The DCRRA strongly recommends that Mn/DOT and all railroad operators be proactive and thorough in the involvement of County and municipality staffs and the public in identifying and mitigating safety, noise and traffic issues related to any future capacity improvement projects.

The DCRRA additionally supports identified upgrades to major junctions and bottlenecks that inhibit operations across multiple corridors, particularly those within the Twin Cities metropolitan area where serious operational problems have already been identified and improvements are already under consideration. These improvements, identified through several local planning efforts, are also essential in preparation for expanded passenger rail traffic.

A number of identified improvements to railroads within Dakota County will allow for improved operation within Dakota County. The improvements proposed throughout Union Pacific's Albert Lea subdivision will enable the corridor to manage predicted increases in volumes and maintain access to reliant industries. As specific improvements are identified and refined, the DCRRA strongly encourages Mn/DOT and the individual railroad operators to be proactive in engaging Dakota County in an expansion process to help identify effective actions that mitigate impacts on populations and activities near the railroads.

The Plan also recommends improvements to Class III Railroads and other lower volume segments of the state system to operate at minimum standards for speed, maximum car weight and crossing safety. Dakota County supports these standards as an important step towards maintaining rail service coverage within the County and throughout the State.

Passenger Service

Dakota County has an interest in the development of passenger rail within the state and the region, both for the opportunity for additional regional travel options for County residents and the impact on freight movement and cumulative rail traffic within the immediate area. Four of the seven passenger rail lines classified as Phase I projects in the Plan traverse Dakota County, which represents the potential for a substantial increase in overall rail traffic on the existing rail network. As there is increased risk associated with carrying passengers as opposed to only freight, greater consideration to crossing safety should be given to these corridors. As there are other significant impacts associated with increasing volumes through the more densely populated areas of the County, including noise, vibration, disruption to auto traffic, parks and other recreational facilities, the DCRRA recommends that the responsible agencies for each project consult early and continuously with County staff and the public to address these concerns.

The proposed ZIP Rail corridor, with service planned to operate between the Twin Cities and Rochester, poses significant challenges to Dakota County. This corridor has defined service goals that include operating speeds approaching 185 miles per hour, which requires full grade separation from all other transportation infrastructure and new dedicated right-of-way to enable the planned speeds. As has already been noted through the Tier I EIS process, the DCRRA has significant concerns on the potential disruption to local roads and land access in rural parts of the County. Our concerns for this process are explained in greater detail in the attached July 29, 2014 letter to the Passenger Rail Office responding to the scoping booklet.

The DCRRA is further concerned that the early ZIP Rail planning process has failed to be inclusive of all interests within the study area. The lack of a formal policy committee has not allowed for input from local leaders in forming project goals and presenting concerns to date, and may ultimately preclude achieving consensus on a project that can minimize impacts on the corridor while meeting the ambitious service objectives. It is the DCRRA's recommendation that Mn/DOT provide guidance to future corridor planning efforts on establishing an inclusive decision making process that involves elected officials along the corridor.

February 26, 2015
Mr. Dave Christianson
Page 4 of 4

The Draft Plan also identifies the I-35 Corridor (Twin Cities to Albert Lea) as a Phase I passenger rail project, which may entail planning and project development activities in the near term. Dakota County has participated in preliminary organizational meetings on this corridor and has concerns on some of the preliminary service objectives and whether they conflict with established transit service markets near the Twin Cities, and whether they also conflict with the existing restrictions on planning for rail service within the Dan Patch Corridor. Before advanced study of this corridor is pursued, cities and other relevant agencies should consider whether service needs on this corridor align with either commuter or intercity travel markets. If the service needs identified are oriented more towards commuter markets, the DCRRA recommends that corridor development be managed through existing avenues established by the Counties Transit Improvement Board and Metropolitan Council.

Of special interest to the DCRRA is the formation of a detailed financial plan to guide the development and operation of passenger rail service. Such information appears to be at least partially addressed in Section 5 of the plan, which is not presently complete. At a minimum, the DCRRA expects that this plan would provide detail on operating costs, service efficiencies, fare revenues and operating subsidies for each proposed service. The plan should also identify the most feasible options for funding capital improvements for passenger service at local, state and federal levels for each project. This plan should be updated as individual corridors advance through planning and this information is developed in greater detail.

Other

An important trend predicted in the plan is for a substantial increase in the volume of intermodal shipping containers on the state's rail system. In efforts to coordinate broader logistical needs within the state and provide for more efficient rail operations, the DCRRA supports broader efforts to plan, evaluate and establish intermodal transfer facilities within the state.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment on this document. Please contact Kristine Elwood, Dakota County Transit Manager (952-891-7104), for further discussion of these comments.

Sincerely,



Liz Workman, Chair
Dakota County Regional Railroad Authority

cc: Dakota County Board of Commissioners
Brandt Richardson, County Manager
Steven C. Mielke, Physical Development Director
Mark Krebsbach, Transportation Director
Joe Morneau, Senior Transit Specialist



Farmers Union Industries, llc
PO Box 319, 590 W. Park Rd
Redwood Falls, MN
56283
February 23, 2015

Dave Christianson, Project Manager
Office of Freight and Commercial Vehicle Operations
Minnesota Department of Transportation
395 John Ireland Boulevard
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Sir;

Farmers Union Industries is the parent company for five Minnesota based agricultural business units, four of those units are employing 170 employees in Redwood County as the following dba: Central Bi Products, Mid-West Grease, Northland Choice and Artex Manufacturing. In particular Central Bi Products relies on the option for rail to be able to deliver to international markets, in tanker cars, hopper cars and containers for inter-modal shipments to ports. In other cases rail is the only option to be competitive in markets from a total delivered cost basis.

We recognize that access to safe, reliable and economical freight rail service is vital to the economic vitality of our county and to our business.

The increase in the tax base from successful, growing businesses means lower taxes for everyone.

The gains in employment and wages help to contribute to the growth in young families, creating stronger schools and churches and a more robust Main Street. This provides a more stable workforce, which also entices more businesses to locate in the areas served. In addition to expanding the market reach of our business units, farms and businesses, a dependable freight rail line means less wear and tear on our roads, highways and bridges, particularly during the spring thaw.

Because our railroad has become a publicly owned county asset, and because of the state assistance with rebuilding a portion to modern standards, we have been able to invest millions of dollars in new buildings and equipment, hire hundreds of new employees, increase our sales and strengthen our profitability.

Because of the rehabilitation of this rail line, businesses are here in our communities today that didn't exist just a few years ago. We know that other companies are ready to invest in rail-dependent industry as soon as the track is rehabilitated to their location.

We know first-hand what restoration of this line means to all of us. We strongly encourage the state to continue funding, to finish the job, so that the other towns on this line can experience the growth and vitality that a safe and reliable railroad will bring. Let's give them the opportunity to grow their hometown businesses and to prosper, as well.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Duane Anderson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Duane Anderson, President/CEO



Greg Isakson, P.E.
Public Works Director/County Engineer
Goodhue County Public Works Department
www.co.goodhue.mn.us

2140 Pioneer Road • P.O. 404
Red Wing, MN 55066
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March 6th, 2015

David Christianson, Project Manager
Mn/DOT Freight & Commercial Vehicle Operations - MS 470
395 John Ireland Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55155

RE: Goodhue County Comments – Mn/DOT Statewide Rail Plan 2015

Dear Mr. Christianson:

On behalf of the Goodhue County Board of Commissioners I submit their approved comments to the Minnesota Department of Transportation regarding the draft "Mn/DOT Statewide Rail Plan 2015" currently being considered. The Commissioners approved the content of this letter at their March 3rd, 2015 meeting and then directed that I forward their comments you.

Regarding the various drafts of the Rail Plan which have been updated over these last months, of concern to both the Commissioners and this Department is the difficulty all these revisions make in commenting on them. One may have had concerns about specifics in a January 2015 draft which were then found to have been amended or cut in a February version. Sections absent in an early form may have appeared without notice in later copies. I would encourage your office to either make obvious your revisions as you make them, or better yet collect comments as they're made and publish one final draft for review.

Goodhue County would like to reserve the right to both review and comment on the final draft of the Statewide Rail Plan when it is made available. I would also respectfully request, considering our concerns noted in the previous paragraph, that Mn/DOT notify those agencies/groups that have made comments when that final draft is published. As important, please make certain to leave adequate time to make additional comments prior to final publication.

I thank you for your consideration in this matter and encourage you to contact me at your convenience with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Greg Isakson".

Greg Isakson, P.E.
Goodhue County Public Works Director/County Engineer

Cc: Scott Arneson, Goodhue County Administrator

"To effectively promote the safety, health, and well-being of our residents"

[These first comments are specific to the posted Statewide Rail Plan dated February 2015]

Page 2-3, table 2.2: This table shows that High Speed Rail (HSR) has a 'typical route length' of **500 miles**. If this statement is accurate, then why is a connection between the Cities and Rochester not being planned as a 'Conventional Intercity Rail' with a 'typical route length of 100 – 1,000 miles'?

Page 2- 17 Rail-Highway Crossing Safety Improvement Program: With the increase in North Dakota's Bakken oil traveling on the CP line through Goodhue County, the County is supportive of increasing state funding to improve rail-highway crossing safety in the County.

Page 2-25 Population: The last paragraph mentioned that 'the coming decades could see either a re-concentration of growth in the Twin Cities region or a more diffuse development pattern, especially along key corridors such as I-94 and I-35'. If the State expects growth along these interstate corridors, then why isn't there more of an emphasis of working on passenger rail along them as a first priority?

Page 2-28 Growth in Minnesota's Export Economy: This paragraph is discussing exporting of goods. The end of the last paragraph 'and on the passenger rail system for movement between cities for commuters and travelers' is irrelevant.

Page 2-42 Table 2.5: It is recommended that the Cities of Rochester and Duluth be added to this spreadsheet. It is assumed that the 'rail demand' to these cities are well above the demands from the other cities listed in this table to help justify why routes to Rochester and Duluth are 'Phase I in Advanced Planning vs. Phase I or Phase II'.

Page 2-47 Corridor Reclamation: Is there an intent to reclaim corridors that have been preserved through 'interim uses such as bicycle trails'? The Cannon Valley Trail is a solid economic generator for the County and its loss for a railroad would not be welcomed.

Page 3-3 HSR: Twin Cities to Milwaukee Tier I EIS: Goodhue County supports the Selection of 'the CP Mail Line route (Amtrak' Empire Builder route) as the best route locational alternative for the segment between Twin Cities and Milwaukee'.

Page 3-4 HSR: Twin Cities to Rochester (Zip Rail): Goodhue County requests that the State reevaluate the need for a high speed rail (186+ mph) and reconsider an alignment that falls within the TH 52 Right of Way. In addition all the costs of Zip Rail's impacts on in-place highways and intersections must be considered part of the project without cost to local governments. Also, besides mentioning that the U of M and Mayo would 'benefit greatly' by this project, the plan should acknowledge that the local population in Goodhue County would suffer great social and economic hardships from a dedicated track through the County.

Page 5-6 Costs: Beginning at the point in the plan, there are numerous '\$X billion' figures. It is difficult to understand the magnitude of these costs if the actual financial figures are not spelled out. Additionally, many of the tables in this report are virtually blank thus providing no usable information for decision making.

Page 5-8 Table 5.1's comments: It mentions that 'high-speed routes are the most costly to implement.' With the bleak funding scenarios discussed in Chapter 2 and under Financing in Chapter 5, does it make fiscal sense that all the 'Phase I in Advance Planning' projects (besides a second Empire Builder service) are high-speed routes? Further, is rail a viable option to Sioux Falls if subsidies are over \$450 per rider per day, or viable to Fargo if subsidies are over \$200 per rider per day? Airfare would be cheaper.

[These next comments are generalities regarding the posted Statewide Rail Plan dated February 2015]

Goodhue County agrees with the results of the Southeast Minnesota Rail Study which stated that improvements in freight rail access can leverage market growth, increase access to west coast markets, and improve the competitiveness of Minnesota businesses [SE Minnesota Freight Rail Study – 2013; pp. A-15], and we therefore support the financing of those improvements.

Goodhue County supports the position of the Minnesota High Speed Rail Commission that the Mississippi River corridor be the preferred route for high speed rail from Minnesota to both Wisconsin & Illinois.

Goodhue County lends its support to "Minnesota's Rail System Goals" detailed on pages 1-3 through 1-6 of the draft. The County does so with the position that the proposed Zip Rail project is incompatible with those goals.

Goodhue County agrees that the result of the Rochester – Twin Cities Zip Rail Tier I EIS "will impact the Statewide Rail Plan." [pp. A-3] Our position is that the impact, however ameliorated, will not benefit the citizens of the County.

Goodhue County supports recent State laws which require Mn/DOT to study the impacts of increased rail traffic, especially crude-by-rail movements, on rail safety at highway grade crossing. As a result the County urges Mn/DOT to expand all aspects of rail safety well beyond those measures suggested in the draft Rail Plan.

[The following was drafted by Heather Arndt, Co-Chair of Citizens Concerned About Rail Lines (CCARL), is specific to the posted Statewide Rail Plan dated January 2015, and was approved by the County Board for inclusion here.]

Overall, regarding the 2015 Plan's references to proposed high speed rail (HSR) connections to Chicago, it cannot help but be noticed how the River Route HRS plan to connect the Twin Cities to Chicago is not properly addressed. Instead the focus of HSR comment centers on the proposed 'ZipRail' project, a project which has yet to have a Tier 1 EIS determination. HSR to Chicago via the River Route is the only option currently available to the State, utilizes existing rail lines and rail line right-of-ways, and is popularly supported. Goodhue County strongly encourages Mn/DOT to revise the 2015 Plan to properly identify and promote the River Route HSR plan. Remove references to any Rochester to Chicago Routes.

Furthermore, the 2015 State Rail Plan discusses and references the proposed ZipRail (HSR from the Twin Cities to Rochester) in terms as if the project has already completed the Tier 1 EIS and received a Decision of Record from the Federal Railroad Administration. Goodhue County further realizes the role of the State Plan in use as a justification reference by ZipRail proponents. Therefore it is strongly recommended the State Plan be amended to reflect that Mn/DOT does support a fair and earnest route assessment process and remove all references which imply otherwise.

Page / Paragraph	Subject	Content	Issue	Recommendation
	Table 1.2.2.	Cites Rochester-Twin Cities Zip Rail Tier 1 EIS 2015	Table and associated content cite this plan as having already identified issues. At time of writing 2015 Plan, this study and document are neither written nor complete.	Either Change cited source to reflect Scoping Decision Document, or delete reference
	Table 1.2.2.		According to the 1 st para of this section, the 2015 plan should NOT be included as that para says, "previous plans and studies were reviewed", this is not possible.	
2-23 /	Rail Transportation's Economic and Environmental Impacts	Entire Economic Impacts section	Goodhue County takes exception to this entire "assessment" of costs and benefits. Very biased. Does not sufficiently address or even touch on costs. Does not discuss direct and indirect costs to 'fly over' areas (losses of income and tax base); dismisses direct loss of income/employment but lauds possible benefits.	Amend to properly address / identify direct and indirect costs.
2-24 /	Rail Transportation's Economic and Environmental Impacts	Entire Environmental Impacts Section	Goodhue County takes exception to this entire section. Text does not reference / discuss large expanse of potential environmental impacts of new rail lines, instead only focuses on VMT and greenhouse gas for HSR assessments.	Amend section to include appropriate references to watersheds, wetlands, aquifers, and other environmental considerations.

2-24 / 4		"Twin Cities to Chicago, not Twin Cities to Rochester and Twin Cities to Chicago"	Use of Rochester as connection to Chicago as an example is poor. Rochester to Chicago has already been eliminated in 2010 plan as too costly.	Use different cities for example purposes.
2-29 / 1	Economic	"much of the job growth in Minnesota will be focused on service, professional, and management jobs, suggesting a continued growth in demand for commuting and business travel"	Unsubstantiated statement regarding "continued growth in demand for commuting and business travel" as it relates to rail; Assumption / Opinion	Delete or amend to reflect it's an opinion, or provide a source which supports assumption.
2-55 / 2	Passenger Rail Travel Demand	"Passenger demand estimates from these corridors are not included in the Rail Plan"	Unacceptable. Passenger estimates were available and have been cited as justification for further study and should be included now. Updates can be added later, which supersede the ones available as publishing time. Exclusion of these numbers for projects being actively funded with taxpayer money is unacceptable.	Add previous passenger estimates.
3-3	Zip Rail	Entire Section	The entire section is vague and lacking known planning factors / details. This only promotes lack of transparency which is noted in later chapters as something to be avoided. The 2010 Rail Plan has figures for this proposed project. This same document in Tables 4-16 - 4-18 reference this project with cost projections.	Add to the section, and into the appropriate tables, the data used to support Mn/DOT's willingness to provide \$2 million.
4-20 & 4-21	Cost of Project Implementation & Table 4.16	The chapter is for Freight, yet this section and table is Passenger focused.	This section belongs in Chapter 3 (Passenger Rail).	Move to Chapter 3
4-20 & 4-21	Cost of Project Implementation & Table 4.16	Table is empty	The 2010 and previous information in Chapters 2 and 3 clearly show there is data that can be populate this table. If there were truly no projections there could be no rough total cost projection of \$8.4 billion.	Populate the table with cost projections.
5-3 / 1	Passenger Rail near term actions	"Continue development of Tier 1 priority services through environmental and permitting process, e.g. .. Twin Cities-Rochester."	Biased against thorough and fair analysis of No Build option for Twin Cities to Rochester (ZipRail). Shows presumption of results. Implies lack of integrity of process.	Rewrite to remove bias and presumption of results.

5-4 / 7	Program Summary	"Develop High Speed Rail passenger service to ... Rochester.."	Biased against thorough and fair analysis of No Build option for Twin Cities to Rochester (ZipRail). Shows presumption of results. Implies lack of integrity of process.	Rewrite to remove bias and presumption of results.
5-11 / Figure 5.2	Summary of Individual Passenger Route Performance	Table is missing	Unacceptable. The 2010 plan had this figure included for analysis (Figures 5.1 & 5.2)	Add figure.
5-12 / Table 5.2	Passenger Project Performance Measures - Benefits	Table is empty	Unacceptable, especially for projects in advance planning.	Complete table with figures.
5-16 / Figure 5.4	Phase I Shared Passenger /Freight Rail Infrastructure Cost	Figure is missing	Unacceptable, especially for projects in advance planning.	Add figure.
5-17 /	Public and Private Economic Benefits	Entire Section	1) Section is repeat of Chapter 2, "Rail Transportation's Economic and Environmental Impacts"	See issues identified for Chapter 2.
5-17	Passenger and Freight Capital Program	Entire section missing	Unacceptable, especially for projects in advance planning stages.	Release of incomplete document negatively impacts ability for thorough comments / critiques.
6-03	Passenger Rail Forum meeting workshop	"Workshops occurred at the following PRF meetings: Feb 2, 2015"	NO workshop was held during that meeting.	Delete this date/event from the plan. It is not true.
A-3 / 2	Zip Rail	"... aims to eventually provide connection between the Twin Cities and Chicago."	Goodhue County takes extreme exception to this statement. 1) This route is NOT one of the routes brought forward from the 2010 plan. 2) The 2015 State Rail Plan CLEARLY states the HSR Twin Cities to Chicago route under consideration utilizes the existing River Route.	Delete all references to a Chicago route via Rochester.

[The following was drafted by Nora Felton, Co-Chair of CCARL, is specific to the posted Statewide Rail Plan dated January 2015, and was approved by the County Board for inclusion here.]

- 1) Freight is a need. It must be the priority, based on statistics given p. 1-1, as it directly affects the State's economy.
- 2) Resurrecting the good old days of passenger rail is a romantic, Minnesota GO Vision that excluded input from rural Minnesota. Of the "thousands... played a role in helping to craft" (p. 1-2) I would like to see the number that came from rural Minnesota.
- 3) ZipRail does NOT meet your standard of "a comprehensive plan for priority passenger rail that overlaps with, and could share, key freight rail trackage" (p.1-2). ZipRail would need to be electrified to obtain its Scoping speed of 186 and last I knew trains run on diesel should NOT be on an electrified track.
- 4) I am concerned that MNDOT would "strive for balance among economic opportunity, personal mobility." Getting goods to market was one government's most important duties—personal mobility is just that, personal; with personal rights and responsibilities.
- 5) The Minnesota GO Vision outlined on p 1-3 stands in stark contrast to ZipRail outcomes:
 - a. Dissecting SE MN "primary assets," farmland which "produces 1/3 of all Minnesota produce" (p. A-15), people in communities along the corridor, and businesses, especially ag, as they try to "connect..to each other and to the markets."
 - b. The proposed dissection of our communities would not be "safe, convenient, efficient and effect movement of people and goods" in SE MN.
 - c. Building berms and installing railroad tracks through "greenfield" expansion is even less "flexible and nimble" than highway construction and does not allow for new "technology —not to rail or driving (i.e. the rapid developing driverless cars industry).
 - d. The ZipRail project does NOT "recognize and respects the importance, significance and context of place... where people live, work, learn, play and access service" as demonstrated by its lack of rural inclusion and project transparency. Rather, the ZipRail, having NO stops in communities along the corridor it destroys, is indeed all about 'just... destinations.'
 - e. ZipRail is NOT "designed in such a way that it enhances the community around it—but rather seals it off in an ugly, un-natural, walled corridor that negatively impacts our wildlife and jeopardizes the "environmental health" (not to mention the health and wellbeing of its riders) of our aquifers and landscape in our Karst region with its active sinkholes.
 - f. ZipRail will reduce Minnesota's global competitiveness and economic development in agriculture technology and agricultural produce as it destroys acres devoted to specialty crops grown for 3 vegetable processors and at least 5 seed-stock companies (3 have research facilities within the corridor), not to mention regular corn and

soybeans---a full 1/3 of ALL MN produce (p.A-15).

6) ZipRail does NOT conform to the Plan's "Passenger Rail Goals" (p. 1-5):

a. It does NOT "result in improve travel options, lower costs and high speeds" for Minnesotans as whole and particularly NOT for those living within the corridor.

b. It does NOT serve to "develop an intrastate intercity ... network" but rather just 2 cities.

c. If ZipRail were expanded to be "part of a larger regional/national system" that would mean abandoning an existing passenger corridor that currently brings revenue to Red Wing and Lake City. This would create a double whammy to the citizens of Goodhue County---destroying tax-base and businesses as it craves out a NEW, greenfield corridor through its center while starving economic development along its largest cities.

d. ZipRail, scoped as a High Speed Rail project (HSR), will NOT be able to "use interchangeable and interoperable equipment." Nor will it be meet the criteria that the "system should be built out on existing freight lines" as the difference in how the trains will be powered and the vast difference in speeds create safety hazards.

e. ZipRail is NOT being "advanced.., incrementally to build ridership and system advantages.., and true HSR."

f. Since when does any business "prioritize project(s)... based on state of readiness"? A thorough Cost/Benefit analysis must be undertaken by the business owner (Rochester/Olmsted Co.) and an unbiased, 3w-party, due-diligence must be done by the banker (MNDOT).

g. ZipRail does NOT provide "efficient transportation" given the few Minnesotans it would serve and their other, most affordable, more convenient, and more readily available travel options (car, bus, commuter vans, and taxis). It certainly would NOT be more efficient for those people living along the corridor.

h. ZipRail has NOT been transparent and communicative to those living within the corridor. As such, it does NOT "better integrate rail into the public planning process"---this can be demonstrated by the recent improvements along Hwy #52 where new bridges are 15 feet too low for the train to pass under and their supports lie in the median where the train is to run. This can also be demonstrated by review ANY of the Comp Plans registered by local units of government within the corridor.

Harvest Land COOPERATIVE

711 Front Street ✦ P.O. Box 278 ✦ Morgan, MN ✦ 56266-0278

2/27/2015

Jalen Pietig
Representative – Grain Division
Harvest Land Cooperative

Dave Christianson, Project Manager
Office of Freight and Commercial Vehicle Operations
Minnesota Department of Transportation
395 John Ireland Boulevard
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Mr. Christianson,

I am writing to you with concern to the Minnesota State Rail Plan, 2015. I can confidently say on behalf of all of us at Harvest Land Cooperative, that the inclusion of the Minnesota Valley Regional Rail Authority in the 2015 Rail Plan will be crucial to the prosperity of not only our Morton branch, but to the cooperative and surrounding communities as a whole in the near future. As we have experienced in the past, and more amplified as of recent, access to a safe, reliable, and economical freight rail service is vital to the economic and logistical vigor of our representative communities and our cooperative.

The inclusion of updates and provisions to the MVRRA line would not only create numerous jobs in the Minnesota River area, but would increase the tax base due to successful, growing businesses, contribute to growth and a more robust Main Street, and significantly reduce wear and tear on our roads, highways, and bridges – especially during the notorious spring thaw. The rehabilitation of the rail line stretching westward towards Morton and the rest of the Minnesota River Valley would more than double the market reach of cooperatives and grain elevators along the line. It would surely provide more profitable opportunities for our patrons, as well as our cooperative. A line improvement would lead to greater returns to our patrons, as well as bigger business at the Twin Cities terminals, meaning more money returned to our local communities and stretching exponentially along the line.

In conclusion, the rail line is already established, but not currently fit for use in our area. The inclusion of the MVRRA in the Minnesota State Rail Plan, 2015 would provide numerous advantages for not only our cooperative, local communities, and local citizens, but for the state as a whole. Better access to multiple national and international markets would be a sure effect, leading to better basis prices and better freight rates. This means more money stays in our local economies, which is a winning combination for everyone, and the goal of representation at the state level.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jalen Pietig". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and a long, sweeping underline.

Jalen Pietig
Representative - Grain Division
Harvest Land Cooperative



HEARTLAND CORN PRODUCTS

March 2015

David Christianson, Project Manager
Office of Freight and Commercial Vehicle Operations
Minnesota Department of Transportation
395 John Ireland Boulevard
St. Paul, MN 55155

RE: 2015 State of MN Rail Plan

Dear Mr. Christianson,

Please allow this letter to serve as a request to include the Minnesota Valley Regional Rail Authority in the updated 2015 State Rail Plan for freight rail.

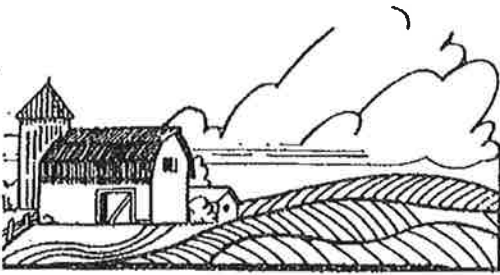
Heartland Corn Products in Winthrop is great example of what improved rail service can do for a community and its surrounding area. Built in 1995, Heartland was located next to a rail line that was unsafe and in disrepair. Over the course of the following twenty years, the rail road has been continually improved upon, and now is fully upgraded to higher speeds and safer, stronger rail from Norwood to Winthrop. These rail upgrades have allowed Heartland to grow in capacity tenfold, return hundreds of millions of dollars to the local farm community, and double our workforce.

We have the ability in this region of the state to produce some of the best crops and commodities in the country, but we need better, safer, and more efficient means to deliver these goods to the global marketplace. Continued improvement of this MN Valley Region Rail west of Winthrop will allow this entire region across Southern MN to benefit from the investment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Scott Blumhoefer'.

Scott Blumhoefer
Vice President
Heartland Corn Products



Meadowland Farmers Coop

P.O. BOX 338
LAMBERTON, MINNESOTA 56152
OFFICE 762-7352

Serving the Community Since 1905

Dear Mr. Christlanson,

I am writing this letter of support for the MVRRA to be included in the updated 2015 State Rail plan for freight rail. Meadowland Farmers Coop was founded in 1905 and has 3500 members in southwest Minnesota.

Meadowland Farmers Coop has a grain facility on the MPLI which loads 25 car trains today, which we hope to expand to load shuttle trains once the rail has been rehabilitated. When we expand, that means we would need more employees which helps keep our schools, churches and a more robust Main Street. It has been demonstrated already on the portion of the line that have been upgraded that safe, reliable and dependable rail service is the catalyst for new capital investments along the line in growing their business and stimulating our regional economy.

We know with a reliable, upgraded rail we will have more access to more national and international markets, which in turn gets us better prices and better freight rates. With a better rail rate there will be fewer trucks running up and down the highways and bridges, particularly during the spring thaw. This means more money stays in our local area and in turn gets spent locally also which is a win-win situation for everyone.

In closing, please consider including MVRRA in the updated 2015 State Rail plan for freight rail.

Thank-You

Meadowland Farmers Coop

Pete Valentin

Comment: Minnesota Farm Bureau Input To Scoping Process For 2015 Minnesota Rail Plan

Minnesota Farm Bureau is very interested in resolving the on-going and serious challenges of improved rail service in our state. As the circumstances of the past year have demonstrated through the failures in rail service to meet the needs of agricultural commodity shipments in a timely and predictable fashion we consider improvements as a high priority.

The comprehensive planning process considered for the update of the 2010 Statewide Freight and Passenger Rail Plan should focus on the role of how a statewide plan of this nature will translate to improved conditions. Planning for the sake of planning should be avoided and perhaps instead of a 200-plus document, a clearer and definitive game plan for what will be priority actions should be the outcome.

Minnesota Farm Bureau's policy views for these priorities match some of the elements included in the 2010 Minnesota Comprehensive Statewide Freight and Passenger Rail Plan. We believe that fewer bullet items and a greater sense of making priorities be priorities (versus a longer list of items) would make for a better plan.

Beyond a plan that seems more inclined to pursue federal funding as an objective, we suggest that the new plan speak to the role that Minnesota can play in effectively working with the national Surface Transportation Board to facilitate improved reliability for meeting the needs of Minnesota rail shippers.

System Improvements â We agree that there should be continued improvements to the condition and capacity of Minnesota's railroads to accommodate existing and future demand. As noted, the current system for freight is not meeting existing demands and needs improvement. The Minnesota 2015 Rail Plan should give attention to expansion and upgrades of existing shortline and regional railroads to provide better service options for farm shippers.

Resolution of Bottlenecks â We agree that more capacity can be achieved through determining bottlenecks in the system and focusing priority attention for addressing the requirements of necessary improvements.

Safety â We agree that a number of safety actions should be incorporated into the plans for the future. Our members have identified a need for requiring Department of Transportation reflective tape to be placed on the sides of all railcars (as is the case with semi-trailers). Minnesota Farm Bureau policy also spells out support for efforts to improve safety at railroad crossings and maintenance of the right of ways to be free of vegetation and things which obstruct the visibility of trains.

Priority On Freight â The most effective role rail service can provide is for the transportation of bulk freight shipments. We recognize that intermodal systems offer positive opportunity for interconnections and enhancement of transportation methods that combine a variety of advantages. It would be good to up-grade and include the expansion of intermodal service access options throughout the state, as covered in the 2010 Plan.

Discontinue High Speed Rail In The Plan â While concentrating on what should be in the 2015 Minnesota Comprehensive Rail Plan, we also believe that there should not be any more attention given to the concept of a high-speed, passenger-only rail system. Minnesota Farm Bureau policy minces no

words in placing our organization strongly in opposition to the ZipRail project and calls for an end to all public funding for this effort, including studies.

The Plan for 2015 needs to direct limited resources for the greatest benefit of all Minnesota. Giving rail freight priority attention matches the needs for Minnesotans with the best effective use of rail. We look for the next phases of this planning process to provide a detailed overview which documents show a passenger-only rail system will be capable of being financially solvent without on-going taxpayer funding, covering all phases of implementation (pre-construction, construction and future operations).

If the Plan for 2015 ignores our request for discontinuing Minnesota taxpayers involvement in continued funding into high-speed rail, we request a complete economic analysis presented to detail what funding has be spent so far, anticipation for all future public funding which will be required and the manner in which this investment will be returned as benefits for all Minnesota taxpayers.

Sincerely,

Kevin Paap, President
Minnesota Farm Bureau

Name: Kevin Paap

Title: President

Organization: Minnesota Farm Bureau

Address: P.O. Box 64370

City: St. Paul

State: Minnesota

Zip code: 55164

Email: kevin.paap@fbmn.org



February 17, 2015

Commissioner Charles Zelle
Minnesota Department of Transportation
395 John Ireland Boulevard, Mailstop 100
Saint Paul, MN 55155-1899

cc: Dave Christianson, Project Manager
Minnesota State Rail Plan
Minnesota Department of Transportation
395 John Ireland Blvd, Mailstop 480
Saint Paul, MN 55155-1899

cc: Dan Krom, Passenger Rail Director
Minnesota Department of Transportation
395 John Ireland Blvd, Mailstop 480
Saint Paul, MN 55155-1899

Dear Commissioner Zelle:

We the undersigned Minnesota State Legislators are writing to encourage MnDOT to move restored inter-city regional passenger rail service between south central Minnesota and the Twin Cities on existing rail lines through Northfield, to Tier One status in the State's revised Rail Plan. We urge MnDot to commence an evaluative study of our rail corridor, including the inter-state connections that this line would restore to our State and communities.

We feel strongly that this project presents sufficient merit to our region and State to warrant serious study for possible development in the near future. We see this project as beneficial to the economic development of our city and region. We also recognize the potential inter-state rail connections that our particular rail line would open for Minnesotans by virtue of the intersection of our line with three of Amtrak's most heavily trafficked inter-state lines that intersect with our rail line as it continues south to Kansas City and Des Moines.

The 2009 Minnesota Comprehensive Statewide Freight and Passenger Rail Plan identifies the Northfield – Metropolitan corridor for Tier II development. Moving this corridor forward to Tier One Status in the Stats Rail Plan for purposes of evaluative preliminary study is more than justified by the forecasted levels of usage, and the apparent technical feasibility of two existing



rail alignments that serve our region. Importantly, study of restored passenger service between south central Minnesota and the Twin Cities through Northfield is also justified by the financial feasibility of this project as compared with other proposed passenger rail projects in the State, since our project would introduce passenger service on existing rail lines.

Elevating our central Minnesota passenger rail corridor to Tier One Status in the State Rail Plan is warranted by the enthusiastic grass roots support that this project has received from regional stakeholders. Representatives of (municipality/county or other stakeholder) have met with elected and appointed leaders from around our region and we see this project as one of common interest to our communities, region and the State.

We strongly encourage MnDOT to elevate to Tier One status restored regional inter-city passenger rail service from south central Minnesota to the Twin Cities metropolitan area, in the State's revised Rail Plan, and ask you to commence an evaluative study of that alignment as part of your statewide rail planning.

Respectfully,



Representative David Bly



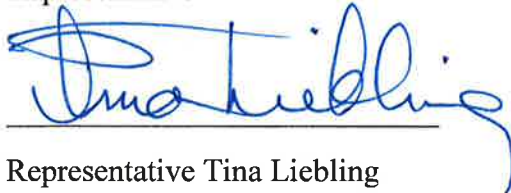
Representative Frank Hornstein



Representative Alice Hausman



Representative Rick Hanson



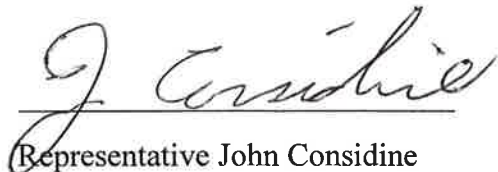
Representative Tina Liebling



Senator Dan Sparks



Representative Clark Johnson



Representative John Considine

Minnesota Valley Regional Rail Authority



200 S Mill Street
PO Box 481
Redwood Falls, MN
56283

Phone: 507-637-4004
Fax: 507-637-4082
E-mail: julie@redwoodfalls.org

MINNESOTA VALLEY REGIONAL RAIL AUTHORITY

RESOLUTION #04-2015

WHEREAS, The Minnesota Valley Regional Rail Authority serving five counties owns and maintain 94 miles of rail, and provides service for shippers on a larger regional basis, and

WHEREAS, The ongoing and growing demand for shipping by rail is increasing, and

WHEREAS, The joint venture relations with other rail lines opens additional markets to other parts of the United States, and

WHEREAS, We know from first-hand experience what restoration of this rail line means to our city/county. It has been demonstrated already on the portions of the line that have been rehabilitated that safe, reliable and dependable rail service is the catalyst for new, private capital investment in buildings structures that grow business and stimulate our regional economy, and

Whereas, new private investment in business expansion increases the tax base for our local schools and government services, resulting in lower tax rates for everybody, and

Whereas, healthy and growing industry means new, good paying jobs for our citizens, and

Whereas, increased employment means more spending in our local economy and at our Main Street businesses, and

Whereas, a safe and dependable rail line means fewer long distance trucks on our streets and highways, and

Whereas, access to the Twin Cities terminal means better access to multiple national and international markets, better prices, and better freight rates, and

Whereas, this means more money stays in our local, regional and state economies, which is a winning combination for everyone, and

Whereas, MVRRA has been a recipient of State Bond funds, and Federal Rail Administration funds since 2002 totally \$28M which has been used for 34 miles of track rehabilitation,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED That the Minnesota Valley Regional Rail Authority will diligently work with the Minnesota Department of Transportation Division of Freight Rail and Waterways to secure further funding to complete rail and bridge rehabilitation on the remaining 60 miles of track from Winthrop to Hanley Falls and requests inclusion in the 2015 State Rail plan.

Adopted by the Minnesota Valley Regional Rail Authority on the 18th day of February, 2015.

Bob Fox

Bob Fox
MVRRA Board Chair

Attest: *Julie Rath*

Julie Rath, Administrator
Julie Rath
MVRRA Administrator

Roll call vote:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	Commissioner Gary Kruggel, Sibley County
<i>Absent</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	Commissioner Tom Workman, Carver County
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	Commissioner Bob Fox, Renville County
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	Commissioner Ron Antony, Yellow Medicine County
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	Commissioner Sharon Hollatz, Redwood County
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	Pete Valentin, MinnRail Shippers

*Serving the communities and counties of Carver, Sibley, Renville,
Redwood, and Yellow Medicine in Minnesota*

**THIS IS
NORTHFIELD**



*A Classic American
River Town.*

[LEARN MORE](#)

January 19, 2015

Charles Zelle
Commissioner
Minnesota Department of Transportation
395 John Ireland Boulevard
Mailstop 100
St. Paul, MN 55155-1899

Dear Commissioner Zelle:

We are writing to encourage MNDOT to move restored inter-city regional passenger rail service between south central Minnesota and the Twin Cities on existing rail lines through Northfield to Tier One status in the state's revised Rail Plan.

We feel strongly that this project presents sufficient merit to our region and state to warrant serious study for possible development in the near future. We see this project as beneficial to the economic development of our city and region. We also recognize the potential inter-state rail connections that our particular rail line would open for Minnesotans by virtue of the intersection of our line with three of Amtrak's most heavily trafficked inter-state lines that intersect with our rail line as it continues south to Kansas City and Des Moines.

The 2009 Minnesota Comprehensive Statewide Freight and Passenger Rail Plan identifies the Northfield – Metropolitan corridor for Tier II development. Moving this corridor forward to Tier One Status in the State Rail Plan for purposes of evaluative preliminary study is more than justified by the forecasted levels of usage, and the apparent technical feasibility of two existing rail alignments that serve our region. Importantly, study of restored passenger service between south central Minnesota and the Twin Cities through Northfield is also justified by the financial feasibility of this project as compared with other proposed passenger rail projects in the state, since our project would introduce passenger service on existing rail lines.

Elevating our central Minnesota passenger rail corridor to Tier One Status in the State Rail Plan is warranted by the enthusiastic grass roots support that this project has received from regional stakeholders. We see this project as one of common interest to our community, region, and the state, and we urge MNDOT to commence an evaluative study of our rail corridor.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brad Ness".

Brad Ness, Advisory Board Chair
Lisa Havelka, Tourism Director
Northfield Area Convention and Visitors Bureau

cc: Dave Christianson, Project Manager, Minnesota State Rail Plan, MN Department of Transportation, 395 John Ireland Blvd , Mailstop 480 Saint Paul, MN 55155-1899

cc: Dan Krom, Passenger Rail Director, Minnesota Department of Transportation,
95 John Ireland Blvd , Mailstop 480 Saint Paul, MN 55155-1899

Northfield Convention & Visitors Bureau
205 Third Street West, Suite A | Northfield, MN 55057
Office: 507.645.5604 | 800.658.2548 | Fax: 507.663.7782



February 2, 2015

Charles Zelle
Commissioner, Minnesota Department of Transportation
395 John Ireland Boulevard, Mailstop 100
St. Paul, MN 55155-1899

Dear Commissioner Zelle:

We writing to encourage MnDOT to move restored inter-city regional passenger rail service between south central Minnesota and the Twin Cities on existing rail lines through Northfield, to Tier One status in the State's revised Rail Plan. We urge MnDot to commence an evaluative study of our rail corridor, including the inter-state connections that this line would restore to our State and communities.

We feel strongly that this project presents sufficient merit to our region and State to warrant serious study for possible development in the near future. We see this project as beneficial to the economic development of our city and region. We also recognize the potential inter-state rail connections that our particular rail line would open for Minnesotans by virtue of the intersection of our line with three of Amtrak's most heavily trafficked inter-state lines that intersect with our rail line as it continues south to Kansas City and Des Moines.

The 2009 Minnesota Comprehensive Statewide Freight and Passenger Rail Plan identify the Northfield – Metropolitan corridor for Tier II development. Moving this corridor forward to Tier One Status in the Stats Rail Plan for purposes of evaluative preliminary study is more than justified by the forecasted levels of usage, and the apparent technical feasibility of two existing rail alignments that serve our region. Importantly, study of restored passenger service between south central Minnesota and the Twin Cities through Northfield is also justified by the financial feasibility of this project as compared with other proposed passenger rail projects in the State, since our project would introduce passenger service on existing rail lines.

Elevating our central Minnesota passenger rail corridor to Tier One Status in the State Rail Plan is warranted by the enthusiastic grass roots support that this project has received from regional stakeholders. Representatives of (municipality) have met with elected and appointed leaders from around our region and we see this project as one of common interest to our communities, region and the State.

We strongly encourage MnDOT to elevate restored regional inter-city passenger rail service from south central Minnesota to the Twin Cities metropolitan area, to Tier One status in the State's revised Rail Plan, and ask you to commence an evaluative study of that alignment as part of your statewide rail planning.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steve Underdahl". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Steve" being more prominent than the last name "Underdahl".

Steve Underdahl
President and CEO

cc: ~~Steve Christianson~~, Project Manager, Minnesota State Rail Plan, MnDOT
Dan Krom, Passenger Rail Director, MnDOT

January 27, 2015

Charles Zelle, Commissioner
Minnesota Department of Transportation
395 John Ireland Boulevard, Mailstop 100
St. Paul, MN 55155-1899

Subject: South Central Minnesota Inter-City Regional Passenger Rail Initiative

Dear Commissioner Zelle:

The Northfield Public Schools is writing to encourage MnDOT to move restored inter-city regional passenger rail service between south central Minnesota and the Twin Cities on existing rail lines through Northfield, to Tier One status in the State's revised Rail Plan. We urge MnDot to commence an evaluative study of our rail corridor, including the inter-state connections that this line would restore to our State and communities.

We feel strongly that this project presents sufficient merit to our region and State to warrant serious study for possible development in the near future. We see this project as beneficial to the economic development of our city and region. We also recognize the potential inter-state rail connections that our particular rail line would open for Minnesotans by virtue of the intersection of our line with three of Amtrak's most heavily trafficked inter-state lines that intersect with our rail line as it continues south to Kansas City and Des Moines.

Of particular benefit to Northfield Public Schools and our other local educational institutions is the access that a regional rail line would provide for our students and staff. A regional line would expand access for a number of high school students to post-secondary educational and career exploration opportunities that are currently inaccessible due to lack of a vehicle or availability of reliable private transportation. It would also expand the ability of the Northfield Public Schools to attract teachers, student teachers, educational interns and volunteers who are not able to live locally and need to be able to commute from other communities.

The 2009 Minnesota Comprehensive Statewide Freight and Passenger Rail Plan identifies the Northfield – Metropolitan corridor for Tier II development. Moving this corridor forward to Tier One Status in the State Rail Plan for purposes of evaluative preliminary study is more than justified by the forecasted levels of usage, and the apparent technical feasibility of two existing rail alignments that serve our region. Importantly, study of restored passenger service between south central Minnesota and the Twin Cities through Northfield is also justified by the financial feasibility of this project as compared with other proposed passenger rail projects in the State, since our project would introduce passenger service on existing rail lines.

Elevating our central Minnesota passenger rail corridor to Tier One Status in the State Rail Plan is warranted by the enthusiastic grass roots support that this project has received from regional stakeholders. Representatives of Northfield have met with elected and appointed leaders from around our region and we see this project as one of common interest to our communities, region and the State.

(over)

Commissioner Charles Zelle
January 27, 2015
Page Two

We strongly encourage MnDOT to elevate restored regional inter-city passenger rail service from south central Minnesota to the Twin Cities metropolitan area, to Tier One status in the State's revised Rail Plan, and ask you to commence an evaluative study of that alignment as part of your statewide rail planning.

Respectfully,



L. Chris Richardson, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Schools
Northfield Public Schools
PH: 507.663.0629
E-Mail: Chris.Richardson@nfld.k12.mn.us

cc: Dave Christianson
Project Manager Minnesota State Rail Plan
Minnesota Department of Transportation

cc: Dan Krom
Passenger Rail Director
Minnesota Department of Transportation

January 5, 2015

Dan Krom, Director
Office of Passenger Rail, MnDOT
395 John Ireland Blvd, MS 470
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Dear Dan,

Thank you for meeting with the South Central Minnesota Intercity Regional Passenger Rail Project on December 3, 2014. As you know, this group is interested in pursuing an intercity passenger rail connection between South Central Minnesota and the Twin Cities. While the exact route has not been determined, the Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority supports additional analysis of this line and its connection to Union Depot.

Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority is an ardent supporter of passenger rail and has been a leader in this area for many years. Our financial investment in the redevelopment of Union Depot as a multimodal transportation hub also signified ongoing support of the development of a multitude of transportation system.

Today, Union Depot's infrastructure accommodates daily Amtrak Empire Builder trains, Metro Green Line light rail transit and bus service from Jefferson Lines, Greyhound, Megabus, Metro Transit and Minnesota Valley Transit Authority. In addition, Union Depot provides car sharing opportunities through Car2go and multiple bike and pedestrian amenities. Soon Union Depot will be the primary downtown connection point for the Gold Line (Gateway Corridor) which recently adopted bus rapid transit as its Locally Approved Alternative. In the future, Union Depot's infrastructure has the capability to accommodate transitways including Riverview, Rush Line and Robert Street as well as additional intercity passenger trains from Chicago, Duluth, Eau Claire, Northfield and destinations throughout the Midwest.

The depot, with its strong intermodal connections, ability to accommodate additional passenger rail service and future transitway connectivity make it an ideal location for passenger trains serving the Twin Cities. Elevating the Northfield to Twin Cities passenger rail corridor to Tier I status within the Minnesota Comprehensive Statewide Freight and Passenger Rail Plan is supported by the Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority as it is critical to connecting South Central Minnesota residents and business to the Twin Cities' business, education, health care and leisure centers.

If you have any questions regarding Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority's support for including the Northfield to Union Depot intercity passenger rail corridor as a Tier I corridor in the State Rail Plan, please contact Tim Mayasich at (651) 266-2762 or timothy.mayasich@co.ramsey.mn.us.

Sincerely,


Rafael E. Ortega, Chair
Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority



200 South Mill Street
P.O. Box 481
Redwood Falls, MN 56283
507.637.4004
radc@redwoodfalls.org

RESOLUTION #03-13-15-01

**RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF INCLUSION OF THE MINNESOTA VALLEY REGIONAL RAIL
AUTHORITY IN THE 2015 DOT RAIL PLAN**

WHEREAS, Redwood County is a member of the Minnesota Valley Regional Rail Authority that serves five counties and owns 94 miles of rail providing service for shippers on a regional basis; and

WHEREAS, Freight rail is important to the economic competitiveness of Minnesota and plays a vital role in movement of key Redwood County Industries goods and services; and

WHEREAS, A major goal of shortline railroads is to revitalize the communities which they serve; and

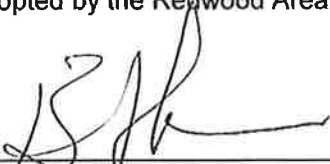
WHEREAS, Freight rail delivers a low cost, long distance transportation option for many key American resources and commodities serving many industrial interests in Redwood County; and

WHEREAS, Industrial facilities located along the Minnesota Valley Regional Rail Authority's line provide good paying jobs, increase the local tax base, and contribute to the local service economy; and

WHEREAS, MVRRA contributes to job growth, economic growth, and increase tax base not only in Redwood County, but the entire region it serves;

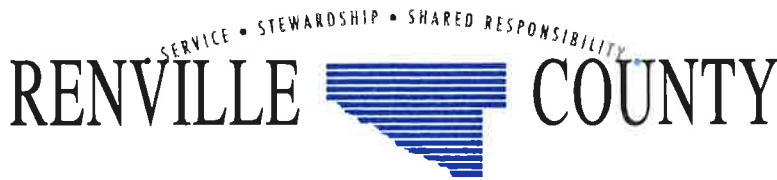
NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED That the Minnesota Valley Regional Rail Authority be considered for inclusion in the 2015 State Rail Plan to complete rail and bridge rehabilitation on the remaining 60 miles of track from Winthrop to Hanley Falls.

Adopted by the Redwood Area Development Corporation on the 13th day of March, 2015.



Bruce Johnson, Board Chair
Redwood Area Development Corporation

RADC Mission Statement: Our primary focus is community and economic development for member communities including job creation and strengthening or expanding existing businesses in the Redwood Area.



Paul Setzepfandt, Chair
Renville County Board of Commissioners
Renville County Government Services Center
Suite 315
105 South 5th Street
Olivia, MN 56277-1484

Phone: 320-523-3710
Fax: 320-523-3748

Affirmative Action - Equal Opportunity Employer

Resolution 8-15
**Resolution in Support of Including the Minnesota Valley Regional Rail Authority
in the 2015 DOT Rail Plan**

WHEREAS, Renville County is a member of the Minnesota Valley Regional Rail Authority that serves five counties and owns and maintains 94 miles of rail providing service for shippers on a regional basis; and

WHEREAS, The demand for shipping by rail is increasing, and a safe and dependable rail line means fewer long distance trucks on our streets and highways; and

WHEREAS, Safe, reliable and dependable rail service is a catalyst for new, private capital investment and economic development that is important to the growth of our county and regional economies; and

WHEREAS, New private investment in business expansion increases the tax base, diversifies our economy and creates new jobs; and

WHEREAS, The joint venture relations with other rail lines and access to the Twin Cities terminal means better access to multiple national and international markets, better prices, and better freight rates; and

WHEREAS, MVRRA has been a recipient of State Bond funds and Federal Rail Administration funds since 2002, totaling approximately \$28M which has been used for 34 miles of track rehabilitation.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED That the Minnesota Valley Regional Rail Authority be considered for inclusion in the 2015 State Rail plan to complete the rail and bridge rehabilitation remaining on 60 miles of track that stretches from Winthrop to Hanley Falls.

Adopted by the Renville County Board of Commissioners this 24th day of February 2015.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul Setzepfandt".

Paul Setzepfandt, Chair
Renville County Board of Commissioners

Attest:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sara Folsted".

Sara Folsted, Renville County Administrator



Renville County Courthouse
500 East DePue Avenue
Olivia, MN 56277

Phone: 320-523-3656
Fax: 320-523-3812
Website: www.renville.com

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Resolution 02-26-15-01

Resolution in Support of Including the Minnesota Valley Regional Rail Authority in the 2015 DOT Rail Plan

WHEREAS, Renville County is a member of the Minnesota Valley Regional Rail Authority that serves five counties and owns and maintains 94 miles of rail providing service for shippers on a regional basis; and

WHEREAS, Freight rail is important to the economic competitiveness of Minnesota and plays a vital role in movement of key Minnesotan industries; and

WHEREAS, A major goal of shortline railroads is to revitalize the communities which they serve; and

WHEREAS, Freight rail delivers a low cost, long distance transportation option for many key American resources and commodities serving many industrial interests in Renville County; and

WHEREAS, Industrial facilities located along the Minnesota Valley Regional Rail provide good paying jobs, increase the local tax base, and contribute to the local service economy; and

WHEREAS, MVRRA contributes to job growth, economic growth and increase tax base not only in Renville County but also the entire region.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED That the Minnesota Valley Regional Rail Authority be considered for inclusion in the 2015 State Rail plan to complete the rail and bridge rehabilitation remaining on 60 miles of track that stretches from Winthrop to Hanley Falls.

Adopted by the Renville County HRA/EDA Board of Commissioners this 26th day of February 2015.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Deb Lingl".

Deb Lingl, Vice-Chair
Renville County HRA/EDA Board of Commissioners

Jake Gillen
District 1

Galen Malecha
District 2

Dave Miller
District 3

Steve Bauer
District 4

Jeff Docken
District 5



BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

320 Third Street NW • Faribault, MN 55021
(507) 332-6101 • Fax (507) 333-3848
www.co.rice.mn.us

Toll Free from Northfield
(507) 645-9576

Toll Free from Lonsdale
(507) 744-5185

TDD (507) 332-6248

January 15, 2015

Charles Zelle, Commissioner
Minnesota Department of Transportation
395 John Ireland Blvd
Mailstop 100,
Saint Paul, MN 55155-1899

Re: South Central Minnesota Inter-City Regional Passenger Rail

Dear Commissioner Zelle:

Rice County has participated in discussions with MnDOT staff and other local government officials in our region to explore the possibility of restoring inter-city regional passenger rail service from south central Minnesota to the Twin Cities. From what we have learned in those discussions and presentations, it appears that an evaluative study of the feasibility of the proposed inter-city regional passenger rail service is warranted.

It is our understanding that the 2009 Minnesota Comprehensive Statewide Freight and Passenger Rail Plan has identified the Northfield – Metropolitan corridor for Tier II development. The Rice County Board of Commissioners respectfully requests that MnDOT elevate this project to Tier I status as part of the revised Rail Plan for the State of Minnesota.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Dave Miller".

Dave Miller, Chairperson
Rice County Board of Commissioners

cc: Dave Christianson, Project Manager, Minnesota State Rail Plan, Minnesota Department of Transportation, 395 John Ireland Blvd , Mailstop 480 Saint Paul, MN 55155-1899



SCALE

Scott County Association For Leadership And Efficiency

February 13, 2015

Mr. Dave Christianson, Project Manager
Office of Freight & Commercial Vehicle Operations
Mail Stop 470
395 John Ireland Boulevard
St. Paul, MN 55155

Re: Minnesota Comprehensive Statewide Freight and Passenger Rail Plan

Dear Mr. Christianson:

We are aware that a number of government entities have been meeting in an effort to pursue the restoration of inter-city regional passenger rail service from south central Minnesota to the Twin Cities along existing rail corridors through Northfield. Several alignments for this service between the core cities are presently identified within the Minnesota Comprehensive Statewide Freight and Passenger Rail Plan. Unfortunately, the current plan identifies these alignments within the Tier II category.

On behalf of the Scott County Association of Leadership and Efficiency (SCALE), I would respectfully request that the Minnesota Comprehensive Statewide Freight and Passenger Rail Plan be revised to elevate the status of these alignment options from Tier II to Tier I status in conjunction with the current plan revisions being developed. Elevation of regional rail service along either of the alignments connecting Mpls./St. Paul to Northfield and beyond is more than justified by the forecasted levels of usage and the apparent technical and financial feasibility of this project in comparison to other proposed passenger rail projects currently being considered within the Tier I category.

SCALE also supports retaining within the Tier I category the passenger rail corridor connection between St. Paul and Mankato. We firmly believe that each of these corridors present sufficient merit to warrant serious study for possible development within the next five years.

Sincerely,

Jay Whiting, Chair
Scott County Association for Leadership & Efficiency

February 2, 2014

Page 2

received from regional stakeholders. Representatives of the Albert Lea Economic Development Agency have met with elected and appointed leaders from around our region and we see this project as one of common interest to our communities, region and the State.

We strongly encourage MnDOT to elevate restored regional inter-city passenger rail service from south central Minnesota to the Twin Cities metropolitan area, to Tier One status in the State's revised Rail Plan, and ask you to commence an evaluative study of that alignment as part of your statewide rail planning.

Respectfully,



Ryan Noland
Executive Director

cc: ✓ Dave Christianson – Project Manager, MN State Rail Plan, MnDOT
Dan Krom – Passenger Rail Director MnDOT
Mike Moore – Board member, Albert Lea Economic Development Agency



Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community

2330 SIOUX TRAIL NW • PRIOR LAKE, MINNESOTA 55372
TRIBAL OFFICE: 952•445-8900 • FAX: 952•445-8906

OFFICERS

Charlie Vig
Chairman

Keith B. Anderson
Vice-Chairman

Lori K. Watso
Secretary/Treasurer

January 28, 2014

Mr. Dave Christianson, Project Manager
Office of Freight & Commercial Vehicle Operations
Mail Stop 470
395 John Ireland Boulevard
St. Paul, MN 55155

Re: Minnesota Comprehensive Statewide Freight and Passenger Rail Plan

Dear Mr. Christianson:

The Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community and other government entities have been meeting in an effort to pursue the restoration of inter-city regional passenger rail service from south central Minnesota to the Twin Cities along existing rail corridors through Northfield. Several alignments for this service between the core cities are presently identified within the Minnesota Comprehensive Statewide Freight and Passenger Rail Plan. Unfortunately, the current plan identifies these alignments within the Tier II category.

On behalf of the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community, I would respectfully request that the Minnesota Comprehensive Statewide Freight and Passenger Rail Plan be revised to elevate the status of these alignment options from Tier II to Tier I status in conjunction with the current plan revisions being developed. Elevation of regional rail service along either of the alignments connecting Mpls./St. Paul to Northfield and beyond is more than justified by the forecasted levels of usage and the apparent technical and financial feasibility of this project in comparison to other proposed passenger rail projects currently being considered within the Tier I category.

The Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community also supports retaining within the Tier I category the passenger rail corridor connection between St. Paul and Mankato. The areas within which we are located, northern Scott County, sits at the critical juncture of two practical and feasible passenger rail service alignments. We firmly believe that each of these corridors present sufficient merit to warrant serious study for possible development within the next five years.

Sincerely,

Charlie Vig
Tribal Chairman

Cc: State Sen. Dan Hall
State Sen. Kevin Dahle
State Representative Drew Christianson
State Representative David Bly
Jon Ulrich, Scott County Commissioner
Dan Krom, MnDot Passenger Rail Project Manager

March 2, 2015

Dave Christianson, Project Manager
Office of Freight and Commercial Vehicle Operations
Minnesota Department of Transportation
395 John Ireland Boulevard
St. Paul, MN 55155

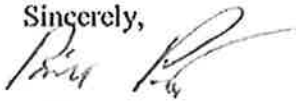
Dear Mr. Christianson:

The Sibley County Board of Commissioners is pleased to submit this letter of support for the Minnesota Valley Regional Rail Authority in support of the Minnesota State Rail Plan 2015. We do so because we know from first-hand experience what restoration of this rail line means to our county. It has been demonstrated already on the portions of the line that have been rehabilitated that safe, reliable and dependable rail service is the catalyst for new, private capital investment in buildings structures that grow business and stimulate our regional economy.

We also know that new private investment in business expansion increases the tax base for our local schools and government services, resulting in lower tax rates for everybody. That healthy and growing industry means new, good paying jobs for our citizens. That increased employment means more spending in our local economy and at our Main Street businesses. That a safe and dependable rail line means fewer long distance trucks on our streets and highways. And that access to the Twin Cities terminal means better access to multiple national and international markets, better prices, and better freight rates. This means more money stays in our local economies, which is a winning combination for everyone.

We know first-hand what restoration of this line means to all of us. We strongly encourage the state to continue funding, to finish the job, so that the other towns on this line can experience the growth and vitality that a safe and reliable railroad will bring. Let's give them the opportunity to grow their hometown businesses and to prosper, as well.

Sincerely,



Bill Pinske
Sibley County Board Chair

Sibley County Administrator's Office
P.O. Box 52
Gaylord, MN 55334

507.237.7800
507.237.4358
dianak@co.sibley.mn.us



Fairfax
PO Box E
Fairfax, MN 55332
507-426-8263

Gibbon
40 W. Park Drive
Gibbon, MN 55335
507-834-6534

Hector
PO Box 338
Hector, MN 55342
320-848-2273

Buffalo Lake
PO Box 99
Buffalo Lake, MN 55314
320-833-5321

Cosmos

Lake Lillian

Darwin

Stewart

Eden Valley

March 5, 2015

Dave Christianson, Project Manager
Office of Freight and Commercial Vehicle Operations
Minnesota Department of Transportation
395 John Ireland Boulevard
St. Paul, MN 55155

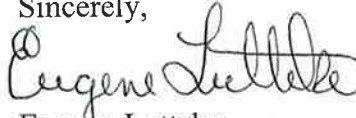
South Central Grain and Energy (SCGE) is a locally owned and operated cooperative involving over 1200 farmer producers. We employ over 80 full-time employees, along with 30-40 part-time/seasonal employees depending on the time of the year. SCGE is a diversified cooperative supplying products and services in grain, agronomy, feed and energy to our producers.

Transportation (particularly rail) is huge with our producers and our cooperative. SCGE needs to access the most competitive markets, not only locally but throughout the U.S. and around the world. One penny on grain means \$250,000 to \$500,000 per year to us which adds up to millions of dollars over many years. That is just one penny! Often times, the rail transportation advantages are much more in the area of 3, 5, or 10¢ plus. This is huge for our area! Multiple accesses to markets by rail is the only way to accomplish this once we are away from local markets.

Rail supports and promotes a healthy business, both with our producers and our cooperative. A healthy agriculture helps rural communities which are currently struggling. Rail also allows rural areas to have a future for the growth of business, employment, and facilities. Without competitive rail transportation and markets, this would not be possible as we live in a global economy. There is also a safety factor in keeping some of the commodities off of our roads and highways, both in safety and expense.

SCGE fully supports the total rehabilitation of the MPL for all of the above reasons and others. Please give careful consideration to the rehabilitation dollars being requested as it is very important to our agricultural community and area.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Eugene Lutteke
General Manager

Minnesota Input for the Minnesota State Rail Plan 2015 Update

The St. Croix Valley Rail Group, a citizens group of over 50 people in Hudson, New Richmond and River Falls Wisconsin is enthusiastically supportive of the planned Eau Claire passenger rail line with a stop in Hudson. Thank you for the opportunity to provide input.

We would suggest:

1.Call the stop “Hudson-River Falls.”

This would maximize both recognition of River Falls, the second largest town in the area, with the University there; and to maximize/expand support locally.

2.Modify slightly the MnDOT passenger rail map.

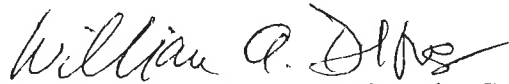
Change the map slightly so that both the Eau Claire line is not hidden so much by the words “St. Paul” and also to show the Hudson train stop on the map.

3.In future planning consider the Fox River Valley.

In future planning, consider extending the Eau Claire line to Stevens Point and eventually Neenah and the Fox River Valley (Appleton, Green Bay), connecting to the Midwest High Speed Rail Coalition’s proposed Milwaukee to Green Bay route. This would connect the Twin Cities to the economically prosperous area of the Fox River Valley, providing additional economic support for Minnesota and the Twin Cities.

4.Conduct Hudson and River Falls Public Meetings.

Work with local officials and our citizens group to hold public meetings in Hudson and River Falls in the next year, such as was so successfully done in Eau Claire.



Name: William A. Draves, representing the St. Croix Valley Rail Group

Email: draves@lern.org Phone: 800-678-5376 (work)



St. Olaf College
1520 St. Olaf Avenue
Northfield, MN 55057

stolaf.edu

January 26, 2015

Mr. Dave Christianson
Project Manager, Minnesota State Rail Plan
Minnesota Department of Transportation
395 John Ireland Boulevard
Mailstop 480
St. Paul, MN 55155-1899

Dear Mr. Zelle,

On behalf of St. Olaf College, I encourage MnDOT to move restored inter-city regional passenger rail service between south central Minnesota and the Twin Cities on existing rail lines through Northfield, to Tier I status in the State's revised Rail Plan.

I believe that this project presents sufficient merit to our region and State to warrant serious study for possible development in the near future. At St. Olaf's Fall 2014 Opening, campus members were asked to dream about what the future for St. Olaf looked like ten years from now, as we celebrate our 150th anniversary. An item that came up in multiple conversations was that of a rail line between Northfield and the Twin Cities. The St. Olaf community is comprised of 3,000 students coming to us from the region, all 50 states and the District of Columbia, and 73 countries. These students also bring parents and relatives to the area. St. Olaf has 110 off-campus study programs, including travel abroad. Almost 70% of the St. Olaf student body will travel abroad during their four years on campus. Our faculty and staff routinely travel nationally and internationally attending conferences and seminars. The inter-city regional passenger rail service project is beneficial to the economic development of our city and region. Additionally, the intersection of this proposed line with three of Amtrak's most heavily trafficked inter-state lines that intersect with our line as it continues south to Kansas City and Des Moines offers significant opportunities for the citizens of south central Minnesota.

The 2009 Minnesota Comprehensive Statewide Freight and Passenger Rail Plan identifies the Northfield – Metropolitan corridor for Tier II development. Moving this corridor forward to Tier I Status in the State's Rail Plan for purposes of evaluative preliminary study is more than justified by the forecasted levels of usage, and the apparent technical feasibility of two existing rail alignments that serve our region.

Elevating our central Minnesota passenger rail corridor to Tier I Status in the State Rail Plan is further warranted by the enthusiastic grass roots support that this project has received from regional stakeholders. Northfield community members have met with elected and appointed leaders from around our region. This project is seen as one of common interest to our communities, region and the State.

In summary, I encourage MnDot to study the feasibility of restoring inter-city regional passenger rail service between south central Minnesota and the Twin Cities on existing rail lines through Northfield, and to move that project to Tier I status in the State's Rail Plan which is currently under revision.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Janet K. Hanson".

Janet K. Hanson
Vice President and Chief Financial Officer

JKH/aza

STEELE COUNTY

Board of Commissioners

Administration Center
630 Florence Ave.
P.O. Box 890
Owatonna, MN 55060

507-444-7400



January 27, 2015

James Brady - 1st District
John Glynn - 2nd District
Mark D. Schultz - 3rd District
James "Corky" Ebeling - 4th District
Nina Huntington - 5th District

Mr. Charles Zelle
Commissioner, Minnesota Department of Transportation
395 John Ireland Boulevard, Mailstop 100
St. Paul, MN 55155-1899

Dear Commissioner Zelle:

With this letter the Steele County Board of Commissioners encourages MnDOT to examine restoration of inter-city regional passenger rail service between south central Minnesota and the Twin Cities on existing rail lines and advance this corridor to Tier One status in the State's revised Rail Plan. We encourage MnDot to commence an evaluative study of this rail corridor, including the restoration inter-state connections to our State and communities.

We feel this project presents sufficient merit to our region and State to warrant serious study for possible future development. We see this project as beneficial to the economic development of our County and region. We also recognize the potential inter-state rail connections that this particular rail line will open for Minnesotans by virtue of the intersection of the line with three of Amtrak's most heavily trafficked inter-state lines that intersect as it continues south to Kansas City and Des Moines.

As you know, Steele County and Owatonna has historically been a transportation hub for this region, from pre-settlement trails, stage coach lines in the 1800's, to 3 passenger rail services through the 1950's, and today the intersection of Interstate Highway 35 and US Highway 14. Restoration of passenger rail service on this historic corridor is a natural back to the future and merits serious examination.

We also believe that elevating our central Minnesota passenger rail corridor to Tier One Status in the State Rail Plan is warranted by the enthusiastic grass roots support that this project has received from regional stakeholders who recognize that this project is one of common interest to our communities, region and the State.

Again, we encourage MnDOT to elevate restored regional inter-city passenger rail service from south central Minnesota to the Twin Cities metropolitan area, to Tier One status in the State's revised Rail Plan, and ask you to commence an evaluative study of that alignment as part of your statewide rail planning. Thank you.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Nina Huntington".

Nina Huntington
Steele County Board of Commissioners Chair



36327 US HWY 71
Redwood Falls, MN 56283
Toll Free: 888-783-7728
Email step@redred.com Fax: 507-644-2184

March 2015

Dave Christianson, Project Manager
Office of Freight and Commercial Vehicle Operations
Minnesota Department of Transportation
395 John Ireland Boulevard
ST. Paul, MN 55155

Step Saver recognize that access to safe, reliable and economical freight rail service is vital to the economic vitality of our county. Not only is it contributing to the local county, it is imperative to Step Saver Inc. to continue to have access to safe, reliable rail service. Step Saver could not be in existence in this local area without it. The rail service gives Step Saver Inc. the competitive advantage to being able service its accounts in greater MN.

Step Saver has made several major improvements in the city of Morton expanding its unload, storage and reloading facility and also built a future office, shop facility and is in the planning stage of adding another facility this summer which will add additional tax base of the local city and county tax base.

Due to continued expansion Step Saver Inc. continues to add good paying jobs to its employment base which would not be able to achieve without the availability to rail service.

Step Saver Inc. knows firsthand what the restoration of this line means to all of us. We strongly encourage the state to continue funding, to finish the job, so that other towns on this line can experience the growth and vitality that the railroad will bring.

Yours Truly

Charles J Steffl, President, owner, Step Saver Inc.



U.S. Highway 169 Corridor Coalition

Working together to enhance safety, reduce congestion and maximize economic development along the US Highway 169 inter-regional corridor.

February 5, 2015

Members

→ Counties

Blue Earth
Hennepin
Le Sueur
Nicollet
Scott

→ Cities

Belle Plaine
Bloomington
Edina
Jordan
Le Sueur
Mankato
North Mankato
Prior Lake
Savage
Shakopee
St. Peter

→ Townships

Louisville
Spring Lake
Sand Creek

→ Other Agencies

Region 9 Development
Commission

Affiliate Members

→ Gold

Bolton & Menk, Inc.
WSB & Associates, Inc.
ShakopeeMdwakanton
Sioux Community

→ Silver

Canterbury Park
HDR Engineering, Inc.
Greater Mankato Growth, Inc.
Land to Air Express

→ Bronze

McDonald's (Jordan, MN)
Happy Chef Systems, Inc.

Dave Christianson
Project Manager
Minnesota Statewide Rail Plan 2015
MnDOT Mail Stop 480
395 John Ireland Blvd
St. Paul, MN 55155

Mr. Christianson,

We have met to discuss interest in pursuing restored intercity regional passenger rail service from south central Minnesota to the Metro cities on existing rail lines.

We support restored intercity rail service between Mankato with stops at communities to the Metro stations along the T.H. 169 corridor as a transit alternative and as a connector to the transit systems, Amtrak, and destinations in the Metro and interstate. We suggest that this project merits further study to move ahead in the next 5 years.

The 2009 Comprehensive Statewide Freight and Passenger Rail Plan identified the route as a Tier One development. Rail service on one of the existing lines needs a comprehensive study for predicted levels of usage, the technical, and the financial feasibility of the project to meet this Tier One schedule. We feel the support of communities in south central Minnesota exists to merit study and progress. Current shuttle and commuter needs are a forecast of long range demands and expectations.

We encourage MnDOT to maintain Tier One status in the Plan 2015 Statewide Rail Plan from Mankato to the Metro area.

Respectfully submitted,

Vance Stuehrenberg
U.S. Highway 169 Corridor Coalition Secretary
Blue Earth County Commissioner
VanceS@blueearthcountymn.gov



**WEST CENTRAL
WISCONSIN
RAIL COALITION**

Affiliated with Momentum West
PO Box 1294
Eau Claire, WI 54702
westwisconsinrail@gmail.com

March 9, 2015

Dave Christianson, Project Manager
Minnesota State Rail Plan
Minnesota Department of Transportation
395 John Ireland Boulevard
St. Paul, Minnesota 55155

Via e-mail to: dave.christianson@state.mn.us

Dear Mr. Christianson:

Since 1999 the West Central Wisconsin Rail Coalition (WCWRC) has provided leadership and coordination to develop passenger rail service through West Central Wisconsin (Eau Claire, Menomonie and Hudson) as part of a regional strategy to ensure a balanced transportation system necessary for long term sustainable economic growth. We are affiliated with the Momentum West regional economic development organization.

We appreciate the inclusion of the Twin Cities-Eau Claire route as a Phase I Corridor in Minnesota's envisioned intercity passenger rail network. There is substantial commerce between our corridor cities of Eau Claire/Chippewa Falls, Menomonie, Baldwin, Hudson/River Falls and the Twin Cities. The implementation of multiple rail passenger frequencies between these cities will be a significant asset to the transportation system of our region. In fact, as evidenced by strong ridership growth on passenger rail corridors throughout the country, having our communities served by passenger trains will become increasingly important to maintain economic competitiveness.

As the plan goes forward towards implementation, we also recommend consideration of selected commuter-oriented frequencies to provide additional value to the corridor, as well as dedicated intermodal bus connections to nearby communities such as River Falls, Chippewa Falls and communities in Polk and Barron counties. Finally, run-through services to other network cities like St. Cloud would be advantageous.

We also applaud the recognition of public-private partnerships as an emerging opportunity to advance the development of passenger rail service.

Sincerely,

Scott Rogers, Chair
West Central Wisconsin Rail Coalition