



The Honorable Tim Walz
Governor of the State of Minnesota

The Honorable Peggy Flanagan
Lt. Governor of the State of Minnesota

Members of the Minnesota Senate

Members of the Minnesota House of Representatives

July 20, 2020

RE: Urgent Request to Support Communities through Reform, Projects and Jobs

Dear Elected Officials of Minnesota:

Minnesota is facing many crises right now and the Legislature has an outsized ability and responsibility to help our state move in the right direction. We call on you to continue working with great urgency to pass and enact the following:

- Significant police accountability and reform
 - A bonding package that meets important needs for the state around water infrastructure, community rebuilding, transit and natural lands
 - Funding for Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund projects
- 1) **Police Accountability and Reform, Community Redevelopment and Immediate Relief**
MEP strongly supports the proposals passed by the Minnesota House and supported by the People of Color Indigenous Caucus. We urge the Senate to have meaningful hearings around these proposals and negotiate earnestly to move Minnesota forward on police reform.

It is also essential that the Legislature provide funding for communities to plan together, and then rebuild their spaces, local businesses, jobs and economies, streets, parks, homes, options for transit and more to meet the vision residents develop for their own neighborhoods and communities.

- 2) **Bonding**
MEP appreciates several aspects of the proposed budget in H.F 3, particularly its strong support (\$284 million) for improving water infrastructure across the state and \$55 million to build out metro area Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) –essential for the critical B and D lines. The support for these priorities will benefit the people of Minnesota and our highly valued natural resources.

While we wish that support could be even greater (an additional \$20 million) to enable more BRT planning and options for taking advantage of possible federal funding opportunities, we also wish the proposed appropriation for Greater Minnesota Transit Capital program were much stronger (we support the \$10 million from the Governor's budget, as opposed to the \$2 million currently in HF 3). Transit is about connection and people of all ages in every part of the state need the choices that an efficient, reliable transit system provides.

A Note on CREP and Natural Lands: We are disappointed that at a time when farm, climate and health crises are growing, the proposed HF 3 budget does not even minimally invest in our state's natural lands – arguably the investments most needed for our long-term health.

We urge legislators to follow the Governor's proposal that sought \$46.5 million for the acquisition, protection and improvement of lands, from prairies to forests. This is the only sector of our economy that can go from being an emitter of carbon to a carbon sink.

We particularly ask you to increase the appropriation for RIM Reserve from the \$1 million currently in HF 3 to the \$16.5 million recommended by the Governor in order to leverage federal dollars for Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). Each state dollar secures \$2 from the federal program. A USDA economic assessment found that this \$16.5 million state investment matched by \$33 million in federal funding would create or maintain 461 jobs.* Minnesota cannot afford to miss these opportunities for progress.

Equitable and Inclusive Procurement and Hiring: While not all project request can be met in this year's bonding bill, we hope that legislators will include provisions to ensure equitable and inclusive procurement and hiring in all contracts. Our state's bonding investments can build more than structures, it can also help generate economic prosperity among underrepresented and underserved communities in Greater Minnesota and in the Twin Cities metro area.

3) **Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF)**

Over 250 jobs and \$60 million dollars in constitutionally dedicated funds are sitting idly by, unable to move forward until an ENRTF funding package is signed into law. These funds are not available for other purposes. Legislators withholding action on this funding in order to seek leverage in broader philosophical disputes is irresponsible, detrimental and unacceptable. We appreciate that the House passed an ENRTF funding bill in May. We ask both bodies to now introduce a stand alone bill this special session that can be passed and signed into law. At a time when other bills may be challenging to negotiate, this package can be an easy win for everyone.

Let's make sure the future we are building serves us all in all of the ways we need: by providing good jobs that build strong communities, enables good health, and helps meet the climate change imperative before us.

Sincerely,



Steve Morse
Executive Director

Alliance for Sustainability

Cannon River Watershed Partnership

Clean Up the River Environment (CURE)

Climate Generation: A Will Steger Legacy

Friends of Minnesota Scientific and Natural Areas

Friends of the Boundary Waters Wilderness

Friends of the Mississippi River

Land Stewardship Project

League of Women Voters Minnesota

League of Women Voters Upper Mississippi River Region

Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy

Minnesota Interfaith Power & Light

Minnesota River Valley Audubon Chapter

Minnesota Well Owners Organization

Move Minnesota

Pollinator Friendly Alliance

* References for this assessment and other USDA-NRCS IMPLAN analyses are available at:
<http://www.economics.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/implan/>.