



Governor Tim Walz and Lt. Governor Peggy Flanagan
130 State Capitol
75 Rev Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55155

cc:

Charlie Zelle, Chair of the Metropolitan Council
Nancy Daubenberger, Commissioner of MnDOT
Speaker of the House Melissa Hortman
Senate Majority Leader-designate Kari Dziedzic
House Majority Leader-designate Jamie Long
House Transportation Chair Frank Hornstein
Senate Transportation Chair-designate Scott Dibble

December 21, 2022

Dear Governor Walz and Lt. Governor Flanagan,

Thank you for the commitments you made this September in your Climate Action Framework. We are asking you to include in your 2023-2025 Budget the investments required to fulfill those commitments.

The Climate Action Framework specifically included “priority actions” to “increase funding for nonmotorized transportation” and “increase transit services, create more reliable and convenient transit networks, prioritize services in communities where transit is essential and residents are disproportionately affected by air pollution.” The Framework also recognizes these actions are needed to “decrease vehicle miles traveled 20% per capita by 2050,” and outside research indicates that Minnesota will have to increase this target to 20% VMT reduction in real terms to meet established climate commitments and targets (see, for example, the Rocky Mountain Institute/Natural Resource Defense Council comment to MnDOT’s Statewide Multimodal Transportation Plan). We appreciate the specificity of needed actions described in the Framework, including changing land use policies.

The Framework also notes that the needed actions will address inequality and have non-climate benefits including:

- Healthier communities from more active transportation and reduced pollution
- Safer communities with fewer traffic crashes
- More accessible transportation that supports people of all physical abilities

None of this is possible without **ongoing, dedicated investments** that mirror the scale of the problem. This is particularly true in the Twin Cities metro region, which is where Vehicles Miles Traveled (VMT) have been increasing the most.

But when it comes to VMT, the metro area is not just the problem, it is also the solution.

Forward-thinking regions recognize that transit cannot be dismissed as a social service to be used as a last resort, but rather that it can and must serve as a high-quality network to address inequity and move a significant and broad cross section of our community for all their daily needs. With real investment, transit is proven to improve economic competitiveness, catalyze development and fundamentally change land use patterns.

Reducing VMT requires strong and comprehensive alternatives to driving, including biking, walking, and transit options that serve all Minnesotans. Both the House and Senate have recognized this and approved Transportation Funding Bills that included versions of a metrowide sales tax for transit in previous sessions: The House passed a ½ cent metrowide sales tax in 2019 and 2021. The Senate passed a ¾ cent metrowide sales tax in 2013.

To address both inequality and the climate crisis, Governor Dayton consistently supported a ½ cent metrowide sales tax. The urgency to address inequality is no less important than it was during the Dayton Administration, and the scale of needed climate action has only increased with the passage of time. The need is great, time is short, and the existence of a new DFL trifecta presents an opportunity we cannot afford to miss again, as we did ten years ago.

We call on you to make up for lost time and include in your budget new, ongoing, dedicated revenue streams in the metro area which would produce \$616 million per year over a ten-year period (2021 estimate). This could be achieved in two ways: by approving a 1 cent metro-wide sales tax - or a ¾ cent tax combined with other sources, including a potential shift in Motor Vehicle Sales Tax (MVST) allocations.

Like all the previous proposals referred to above, the bulk of these dollars should go to build out and operate a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) network, but with a crucial 10% set aside for walking and bicycling infrastructure and education and safety programs. In order to pass the legislature, this tax must be in the metro only, and not tax communities outside the metro area.


Importantly, this kind of ongoing, dedicated revenue will support the operation and maintenance costs of a built-out system—something that bonding and surplus dollars cannot do. If we do not hire more bus drivers, we will never provide riders the convenient frequency they need, which is proven to increase ridership.

Needs in Greater Minnesota

Finally, while VMT is relatively stable in Greater Minnesota there are similar challenges of equitable access and needs for both transit (capital and operating) and biking and walking (infrastructure, programming, and community engagement). We also resubmit our 2021 proposal to **invest at least \$183.5 million per year for ten years for transit and active transportation outside the Metro Area**. We ask you to direct your commissioners to also incorporate that into your proposed budget.

Without investment at this scale, we will not be able to address emissions from the transportation sector fast enough for Minnesota to do its part to address the climate crisis.

Sincerely,



Steve Morse
Executive Director

Submitted on behalf of the following organizations:

ACER - African Career, Education, & Resources Inc.
Albert Lea Area Cyclists
Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1005
Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota
Bike Thief River Falls
Clean Water Action Minnesota
CURE - Clean Up the River Environment
Fresh Energy
Greater Mankato Bike and Walk Advocates
Health Professionals for a Healthy Climate
Honor the Earth
ISALAH
Lakeville Friends of the Environment
League of Women Voters Minnesota
Minnesota 100% Campaign
Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy
Minnesota Interfaith Power & Light
Minnesota River Valley Audubon Chapter
MN350
Move Minnesota
Our Streets Minneapolis
Resilient Cities and Communities
Saint Paul Bicycle Coalition
SEIU Healthcare Minnesota and Iowa
SEIU Local 26
Sierra Club North Star Chapter
Sunrise Twin Cities
Sustain Saint Paul
Take Action Minnesota
The Alliance
The Cultural Wellness Center
We Bike Rochester
We Walk in Duluth
Zeitgeist Arts