



April 27, 2023

Members of the Minnesota Senate

Re: HF 2887 Senate Version

Dear Senator,

On behalf of the Minnesota Environmental Partnership and the organizations signing below, we would like to voice our support for the Senate Transportation Finance and Policy Bill, HF 2887. We greatly appreciate the many good provisions and targeted investments made in this bill to support our transportation infrastructure. This budget plan will help reduce the sector's carbon emissions – the largest single source of climate pollution in our state – and reduce its health impacts on our people and environment. We appreciate that the bill provides both capital investments and ongoing support for clean transportation options that give Minnesotans more freedom to get around in their everyday lives.

We would like to highlight some key provisions in this bill that our statewide coalition members believe are especially important in moving Minnesota forward toward a cleaner, more robust, equitable and more effective transportation system.

Ongoing funding for transit

While we appreciate this bill's provision of funds for **transit system operations** (Art. 1, Sec. 3, Subd. 2, p. 19), especially important is the provision for a **sales tax in the Twin Cities Metro Area to fund the ongoing operation of public transit in the seven-county region**. (Art. 3, Sec 10, p. 46.) While one-time surplus funds and bonding can help build a robust transit system, they cannot support the long-term operation of our public transit systems. To effectively compete with other metropolitan regions and reduce our carbon emissions, we must provide Minnesotans with convenient and reliable transit service, and that starts with stable funding for operations.

We appreciate that implementing any new tax, especially a sales tax, can be a contentious issue. But stable funding for public transit service that knits the Metro region together will generate enormous economic dividends for our state and help numerous Minnesotans get to where they need to go, regardless of whether they own a car. As stated in the Climate Action Framework it is imperative to “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.”

While the Metro area will pay for and benefit most directly from these services, the entire state will be lifted by the economic and environmental gains. However, we believe that the rate of the metro-area sales tax should be $\frac{3}{4}$ of a percent, rather than the $\frac{1}{2}$ of a percent currently included in this bill. The Metro area needs a stable and robust source of funding for transit operations, and the $\frac{3}{4}$ percent tax will be far more effective.

Investments in intercity transit and electrification

- **Passenger Rail** – The \$56,315,000 for intercity passenger rail will help grow our state’s economy and put new destinations in reach for Minnesotans through projects including the Minneapolis-Duluth Northern Lights Express project and expanded Amtrak train service between the Twin Cities and Chicago. (Art. 1, Sec. 2, Subd. 2, p. 5.)
- **Electric Vehicle Infrastructure** – This bill invests \$13,600,000, matched by federal aid, in Minnesota’s Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Program, which helps Minnesotans benefit from the rapid rise of zero-emission electric vehicles by making it easier to charge those vehicles across the state. (Art. 1, Sec. 2, Subd. 5, p. 15.)

Active transportation

- **Active Transportation Program** funding in the amount of \$50,000,000 this biennium will help Minnesota communities invest in infrastructure – such as sidewalks and trails – that make it easier for residents to bike, walk, and roll to their destinations – the cleanest and healthiest form of transportation. (Art. 1, Sec. 2, Subd. 2, p. 4.)
- The **Safe Routes to School** program will receive \$21,000,000 in the biennium in this bill to help communities construct targeted improvements – such as crosswalks and sidewalks – that make it safer for Minnesota kids to walk and bike to school. (Art. 1, Sec. 2., Subd. 2, p. 5.)

Climate and Environment

- **Clean Transportation Standard Working Group** – This provision would create a task force to study and make recommendations ahead of the 2024 session on a clean transportation standard to help solve Minnesota’s largest climate challenge: getting net greenhouse gas emissions from transportation fuel to net zero by 2050. (Art. 8, Sec. 56, p. 178.)
- **Transportation Greenhouse Gas Emissions Assessment** – This provision would require the Department of Transportation to assess the climate impact of highway expansion projects and mitigate their impact. Addressing these emissions that are also harmful to public health must be part of our state’s climate action strategy. (Art. 8, Sec. 18, p. 137.)
- **Climate Action Policy Plan** – This provision would require the Metropolitan Council to include climate action in its long-range comprehensive planning, helping to effectively target the Metro area’s greenhouse gas emissions. (Art 6, Sec. 5, p. 82.)
- We are pleased to see the **Highways for Habitat Program** included in this omnibus bill with a \$1,000,000 appropriation. This program would provide and protect critical roadside shelter for Minnesota’s most vital and vulnerable pollinator and wildlife species. (Art. 1, Sec. 2, Subd. 3, p. 7.)

We thank you for your leadership on these important issues. Please support this historic legislation to invest in the future of our great state.

Sincerely,



Steve Morse
Executive Director

Submitted on behalf of the organizations listed on the following page:

Pollinator Friendly Alliance

Renewing the Countryside

League of Women Voters Minnesota

Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota

Resilient Cities and Communities

St. Paul Audubon Society

Minnesota Ornithologists Union

Vote Climate

Move Minnesota

Minnesota Well Owners Organization

League of Women Voters Upper Mississippi River Region*

**denotes non-MEP member*