



March 15, 2022

Senator Scott Newman
Minnesota Senate Building, Room 3105
95 University Avenue West
St. Paul, MN 55155

Chair Newman and Members of the Senate Transportation Finance and Policy Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on SF 3990 and 3992. As county board chairs of Ramsey and Hennepin Counties we understand the critical role transportation plays in the daily lives of Minnesotans in the fast-growing metro region and the need to deliver safe, efficient, and equitable travel options. As a result, we strongly support transportation infrastructure that improves access to jobs and markets and helps us compete economically into the future.

Minnesota counties are responsible for critical arteries in the state's transportation system and rely heavily on state funding to maintain and improve our road and bridge infrastructure. Metro counties have made significant investments in the metro transit system, partnering closely with the Metropolitan Council. Metro counties have invested more than \$2.2 billion in transit guideway projects, including the Blue Line LRT, Green Line LRT, Orange Line BRT, Northstar Commuter Rail, and Southwest LRT. These projects bring immense value to our entire state, securing over \$2 billion dollars in federal funds, supporting tens-of-thousands of jobs, and constructing the backbone of the region's transit system. We are also committing significant future investment to expand the transit system by funding the Gold Line BRT, Blue Line Extension LRT, Purple Line BRT and Riverview Corridor.

Guideway project investments make the transportation system more effective by providing fast and frequent transit service, reducing congestion, expanding access to jobs, and reducing carbon emissions. The National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) [estimates](#) that one travel lane at peak conditions can move between 1,000 to 2,800 people an hour in private vehicles and frequent buses. A dedicated guideway, on the other hand, is ten times more efficient and can move between 10,000 and 25,000 people an hour. Across the country and in our region, guideway projects also spur valuable economic development, especially multi-family housing. In the last 15 years, more than 35% of development in the Twin Cities region has occurred in high frequency transit corridors like light rail and dedicated bus rapid transit. This includes nearly 40,000 multifamily units (42% of the region's total) on just the 3% of regional acreage served by high frequency transit with another 35,000 units in the works.

Senate File 3990 would shift all responsibility to plan, build, operate and maintain guideways to metro counties. The Met Council would be responsible to operate the lines thus counties would lose local control of locally raised tax dollars. County resources would serve as a literal blank check for the Met Council, jeopardizing any ability to exercise fiscal oversight. The result would be to undo the longstanding partnership between the Met Council and counties that has allowed our region's transit system to make transformative improvements.

Senate File 3992 would bring to grinding halt the progress on the Gold Line BRT, Blue Line Extension LRT, Purple Line BRT, Riverview Corridor and any other future transitways, delaying these projects and increasing construction costs. The growing communities along these corridors are some of the most diverse and transit dependent communities in the metro and seeking enhanced transit service that meets their travel needs and connect them to the broader transit network. Minnesota would also miss out on once-in-a-lifetime federal investment in our nation's infrastructure from the Federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA). Congress, with strong bipartisan approval, doubled the highly competitive federal program to fund transit construction to \$23 billion over five years, which typically provides a 50% match for large public transit projects. Minnesota has three dedicated guideway projects in the program's que that will leverage nearly two billion in federal funds. This proposal would send that federal money to our peer metro regions building dedicate guideway transit projects in Austin TX, Memphis, Seattle, and Salt Lake City.

Minnesota's transportation system needs additional funding and broad consensus must be built to fund the construction, maintenance, and operation costs of our transportation infrastructure. As county leaders, we are committed to working collectively with our county partners, MnDOT, the Met Council, business community, and residents to help find solutions to the funding challenges the transportation system faces.

Thank you for your time and consideration,



Trista MatasCastillo
Chair, Ramsey County Board



Marion Greene
Chair, Hennepin County Board