

Thank you, Chair Marty, and members of the Minnesota Senate Finance Committee for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of the transportation omnibus bill.

Those who have been heavily invested in the legislation included in this omnibus package — from bill authors to the plethora of testifiers who have, for months, attended these committees — know that this is the culmination of one of the most ambitious transportation initiatives in the United States. Minnesota has the opportunity to establish itself as a leader not only in the Midwest, but in the entire country. With the passage of this bill, our state will put into action projects that are decades overdue; projects that, in addition to providing affordable alternatives for car-free Minnesotans, will uplift our economy and save our state billions of dollars in the long run.

I urge this committee to appreciate the magnitude of SF 3157. It is no exaggeration to say that this piece of legislation may define the future of our state. Everything outlined therewithin, from the expansion of passenger rail service to the funding of various transit projects, represents a fundamental shift of the status quo. Without these initiatives, Minnesota will fall far short of its 2040 climate goals. Without a transportation plan as ambitious as this, our taxpayers will be left to shoulder the burden of an unsustainable, self-destructive, and financially draining car-centric paradigm. However expensive these provisions may appear upfront, they are nothing compared to the cost of inaction.

I ask that this bill be amended to match the language of its House companion; most importantly, appropriating the necessary funding for the Northern Lights Express. I also ask that this committee include the seventy-five cent delivery tax that was present in the original language of this omnibus.

Thank you for your consideration of this testimony.

Sincerely,
Jesse Cook