

Thank you Chair and members of the committee,

My name is Darwin Schaeferlane, and I am a Bloomington Resident. I'm going straight to the point.

I'm so sick and tired of these complaints about raising taxes. Every single committee I've testified on this Omnibus transportation bill with, I always hear the same complaints about how the raised taxes would somehow be regressive against Minnesota's most vulnerable. Let me set the record straight; the status quo is what's regressive.

Just this month comes two years since I was struck by an SUV in a crosswalk. I have suffered from physical disabilities and PTSD from this. My mother has stage 4 breast cancer and literally had to go back into the emergency room for her fourth surgery in the last 6 months. We are Minnesota's most vulnerable, we often are the ones who are ordering deliveries. We pay high taxes in this state so we have high quality services, infrastructure, and support so we can live. Minnesota taxes are high but it also gives us the high living standards that prevent us from being at the bottom, like Alabama or Mississippi.

By refusing to fix the potholes, the terrible sidewalks and inaccessible, dangerous, and lethal infrastructure in this state, you are complicit in the traffic violence that results in what happens to me, and hundreds of Minnesotans every year. Traffic violence which is growing at insanely high rates, that kills people, and leaves countless more suffering long term. This should not be acceptable. Climbing over snowbanks on unplowed and icy sidewalks should not be acceptable, waiting for buses in the cold with 30 to 120 minute frequencies should not be acceptable, not being able to walk or access local stores within a mile or two of your house should *not* be acceptable, but that is the regressive norm we have.

Should you still be skeptical, I invite every single Senator in this state to come take a walk along Lyndale Ave in Bloomington, just a couple miles down American Boulevard to 98th St. You could take a walk along Snelling Ave in St Paul, France Avenue in Edina, 98th Street in Bloomington, the list goes on. These streets and roads are dangerous car sewers that leave you with narrow to non-existent sidewalks, with curb cuts spaced so close together and intersections so wide to walk through, you risk getting hit by drivers every single day. Take a good long walk on these corridors, like many of us Minnesotans do every day, and tell me it is not dangerous, scary, hostile, life threatening and vehemently inaccessible.

If you actually care about disabled and vulnerable Minnesotans, stop virtue signaling to us about how these tax increases will affect us. We know what we are paying for and we know this will make a huge difference for our transportation network, from fixing the crumbling streets, bridges, and roads, to giving us an actual multimodal transportation network that doesn't make us prisoners to our cars. Please reconsider the inclusion of the delivery tax, as well as matching the tax levels in the House version of the Omnibus Transportation bill.

I also think there should be a vehicle weight tax considered on this bill, to supplant declining gas tax revenue and as we switch to electric vehicles which will put more weight on our infrastructure. If the delivery tax is a concern, mirror the amendments made in the House version with exceptions for small businesses, as well as working with the house to make exemptions for deliveries by bicycle and means outside of automobiles, like walking or public transit.

One final concern that I have with both versions of the bill, that if possible could be included in the conference committee or the floor if it cannot be included here, is a provision to update Minnesota's no-fault accident law to exclude collisions with pedestrians and cyclists. We should not be treated like cars in accidents and the fault should be placed onto drivers. Due to that consequence of the No Fault Law, I have still not been compensated for any of the damages or trauma I received from the SUV driver who hit me in the crosswalk at Richfield Parkway and 66th Street. This is frankly insane and should not be the norm.

Car dependency is killing us. Car dependency is bankrupting us. We will gladly pay the dang tax if it means we don't have to pay with our vehicles getting damaged by Potholes, our health and bodies getting damaged by vehicles, and our lives being taken. This is not just about building trains or fixing roads, it's about making sure Minnesotans stop getting killed, just trying to go to the store. If you actually want Minnesota to reach vision zero, I urge this committee and, as Senators, to hear these concerns and support what very well is the best transportation bill in the United States. Thank you, members of the committee, for letting me write in support of this Omnibus Transportation bill.

Sincerely,  
Darwin Schaeferlane