



March 15, 2023

Dear Members of the Senate Transportation Committee,

On behalf of the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce, representing 6,300 employers and their more than 500,000 employees across the state, I am writing to share our support for SF 2506 (Dibble) and SF 1049 (Dibble).

Minnesota businesses depend upon a safe, reliable, efficient, and multimodal transportation system to get their goods to market and their employees, customers, and input materials to their door. For many employers in the metro area, the metro transit system continues to be an important means of drawing employees from across the region to their sites. For some employees, public transit is the only means of transportation available to get to and from work.

In recent years, however, safety concerns within the metro transit system have increased significantly. Just weeks ago, the Met Council released new data indicating that crime on the metro transit system increased by 54% in 2022 – with narcotics and weapons complaints increasing 182% and 145% respectively, and liquor law violations increasing by 92%.

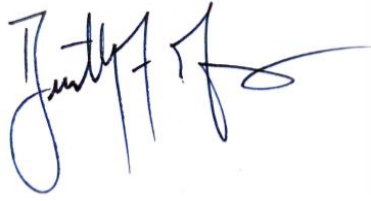
We support SF 2506 as a first step in addressing the safety issues that exist within the transit system – with a particular focus on the light rail system. We are hopeful that the bill’s establishment of a new Transit Service Intervention Project on the light rail system over the coming months will begin to address the many social services challenges that often underpin and sometimes fuel the kinds of behaviors and situations that pose a safety risk to riders. It is our hope that this near-term action over the coming months will lay the groundwork for the longer-term solutions contained in SF 1049 that are aimed at increasing the fare and code of conduct enforcement.

The state and region have made and continue to make significant investments in the metro transit system – both in terms of maintaining and operating the system as well as continuing to build it out. However, if people do not feel safe using public transit, they will not use it. If safety concerns keep riders away, public transit cannot be the complimentary component of our transportation infrastructure that we need it to be.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this input. We appreciate the leadership of Sen. Dibble on this important issue, and we encourage you to support these important pieces of legislation.

Sincerely,

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A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Bentley Graves", with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Bentley Graves
Director, Health Care & Transportation Policy