

HENNEPIN COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

March 4, 2025

Senator Scott Dibble
3107 Minnesota Senate Bldg.
St. Paul, MN 55155

RE: SF 2148 Regional Transportation Sales Tax Allocation for Washington Avenue Bridge

Dear Chair Scott Dibble and Members of the Senate Transportation Committee,

On behalf of the Hennepin County Board of Commissioners, I write to express our support for funding for safety improvements on the pedestrian deck of the Washington Avenue Bridge in Minneapolis.

The Washington Avenue bridge connects the East and West Campuses of the University of Minnesota with cars and light rail travelling on the lower deck and of pedestrians and cyclists using the upper deck, including an enclosed walking space to protect pedestrians from the weather. The County owns the bridge and the University shares responsibilities for parts of the pedestrian deck. The pedestrian deck, in particular, was built for the benefit of students.

The County shares the University's goal to make improvements on the bridge that mitigate the risk of suicide, and we want to make sure students and others using the pedestrian deck have the safest experience possible.

Last session, the University sought funding through asset preservation capital investment dollars and the request is included in the 2025 Governor's bonding recommendations. This project will have a regional and statewide impact, and we see state capital investment funds as the best source of funding. We support the University of Minnesota's Higher Education Asset Preservation and Replacement (HEAPR) request to fund this project in the bonding bill.

Thank you for work on this legislation, the family members and students for their advocacy, and the University of Minnesota for their partnership.

Sincerely,



Irene Fernando, Chair
Hennepin County Board of Commissioners
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