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May 7, 2021

Governor Tim Walz  
Speaker of the House Melissa Hortman  
Senate Majority Leader Paul Gazelka  
House Minority Leader Kurt Daudt  
Senate Minority Leader Susan Kent

(Sent via electronic delivery)

Dear Governor Walz and legislative leaders,

As conference committees commence and you begin final negotiations with House and Senate leadership on the biennial budget, we as climate and environmental advocates urge you to include the half-cent metro-area transit sales tax provision in the House bill as part of a final deal. We know that NOW is the time to make critical transit investments with the power to improve daily life for Minnesota families, to protect our climate, to expand access to jobs and resources, and to create a better future for all of us in a post-COVID world.

The need for an expanded transit system is clear. We need more transit service and supportive bicycling, walking, and rolling connections in order to meet many of our state's goals: to substantially reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 2050; to make Minnesota the best state in the country to raise a family; and to meet our moral obligation to address the inequalities Minnesotans currently face based on race, income, and ability. Providing the reliable funds from a dedicated half-cent sales tax for transit now, combined with the one-time federal funds we've received from recent national relief packages, ensures that we will be well on our way to building out a comprehensive system in the metro area that:

- Ensures transit service is faster, more frequent, more convenient, more sustainable, and more reliable for people throughout the Twin Cities;
- Attracts new transit riders and dramatically improves the lives of Minnesotans who currently rely on transit;
- Rolls out on a timeline that can successfully meet urgent climate and equity goals; and

- Improves transit access and coverage within the 694/494 beltway, enabling more metro residents to easily use transit to meet their everyday needs and realistically forgo car ownership.

**Transit is an essential component of the state's strategy to combat transportation-based greenhouse gas emissions, and to build climate resilience.** Vehicle transportation is the largest source of climate pollution in Minnesota and the U.S. To protect the people and places we love, we need bold transportation change. Transit reduces our dependence on harmful fossil fuels, protects vulnerable lands and water, and gets us closer to ending the climate crisis we're all facing. Now is the time to innovate and expand the system so that Minnesotans see transit as not just a viable option for their commutes—but their preferred means of transportation. Electrification alone will not solve the climate crisis before us.

A half-cent sales tax does not put Minnesota at the front of the pack on transit investments across the United States—and should be considered the minimum acceptable investment in 2021. In fact, we are rapidly falling behind other major metropolitan areas when it comes to transit investments. Cities like Seattle, Cleveland, Dallas, Denver, and Houston all impose transit sales taxes of at least a penny. We need additional investments to just to keep pace.

We stand with you, ready to applaud your dedication to improving the lives of Minnesotans through a significant investment in transit. In what will no doubt be a difficult negotiation on new revenues, we think a modest sales tax increase, limited to the area where Minnesotans will benefit from it most, will be a winning compromise.

Sincerely,  
Sierra Club Northstar Chapter  
Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy  
Fresh Energy  
Minnesota Environmental Partnership  
MN350  
The 100% Campaign  
Take Action Minnesota  
ISAIAH  
Vote Climate  
Minnesota Interfaith Power and Light  
Ecolibrium 3  
Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota  
Minnesota Well Owners Organization  
Move Minnesota

Cc: Rep. Frank Hornstein, House Transportation Committee Chair  
Sen. Scott Newman, Senate Transportation Committee Chair  
Chris Schmitter, Chief of Staff to Governor Walz  
Hue Nguyen, Deputy Chief of Staff for Policy and Legislative Affairs to Governor Walz  
Alexis Donath, Policy Advisor  
Sean Rahn, Executive Director, House DFL Caucus  
Craig Sondag, Executive Director, Senate GOP Caucus  
Susan Closmore, Executive Director, House GOP Caucus  
John Pollard, Chief of Staff, Senate DFL Caucus