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August 3rd, 2026

The Honorable Tim Walz, Governor of Minnesota
The Honorable Peggy Flanagan, Lieutenant Governor of Minnesota
75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. Suite 130
Saint Paul, MN 55155

The Honorable Robin Hutcheson, Chair, Metropolitan Council, 390 Robert St N, St Paul, MN 55101

CC: The Honorable D. Scott Dibble, Senate Transportation Committee Chair; The Honorable Brad Tabke
House Transportation Committee Co-chair; Hennepin County Board of Commissioners

Dear Governor Walz, Lieutenant Governor Flanagan, and Chair Hutcheson:

As an organization with work rooted in North Minneapolis along Olson Memorial Highway and the communities throughout the Blue Line Extension corridor, we write to: 1) urge you to close the project's funding gap, 2) submit a strong federal application this summer, and 3) build the project in a way that allows the people who have waited longest for this investment to stay and thrive.

Our work serves communities long affected by transportation planning and policy decisions, including the routing of harmful highways through communities of color, low-income communities, and immigrant communities across our region and the state. We work so these communities can enjoy the same quality of life as those who do not bear the costs of these systems, with safe, affordable, and accessible transportation choices.

We support the Blue Line Extension because it helps achieve these goals when paired with strong, ongoing anti-displacement protections. These protections are the difference between a light rail transit line that revitalizes the Northside *for* Northsiders, and one that displaces them.

The federal environment has made state leadership more necessary, not less.

Federal actions targeting Minnesota's infrastructure projects, which shape communities across the state, have widened the funding gap and created a shortfall that now sits squarely with state and regional decision-makers. In addition, mandates from the current administration led the Metropolitan Council to remove the Environmental Justice chapter from the project's environmental review record of decision, thereby removing legal protections related to displacement and racial and economic equity.

The federal government is actively destabilizing this and similar projects across the country. But the tools to close the funding gap and to stand up for Minnesota's values of equity, environmental justice and climate action are within your reach.

We support closing the gap with tools at the Council's disposal, especially those that will not reduce funding for much-needed transit investment and service elsewhere in the metro.

In today's hostile federal environment, a local delay alone is a decision that threatens the project's completion. Every month without a plan increases the project's cost and puts \$753 million in federal funding at risk—roughly 21% of the project's total cost.

We ask you to use your authority to publicly defend this important transit investment for Minnesota and to transparently share your plan and timeline.

If this project is canceled, Minnesota will lose thousands of union jobs that create family-supporting construction careers and pathways into them.

Our labor partners have laid out what this project would mean for working Minnesotans: 6,000 jobs to build the project and 40,000 jobs supported directly, indirectly, and through induced economic activity. It would generate millions of work hours for laborers, operating engineers, carpenters, electricians, cement masons, and ironworkers, in every corner of the state. As our state transitions to a transportation system that works for all Minnesotans, we need to create good jobs and apprenticeship opportunities by building transit, active transportation, sidewalks, ADA accessibility, and smarter road maintenance approaches.

The same is true of the development that follows fixed-guideway transit. Between 2009 and 2023, permits were issued for more than \$13 billion in projects within a half-mile of a light rail station, including 36,300 housing units, with another \$7 billion in the pipeline. No other form of transportation infrastructure generates economic activity at that scale. Walking away from this project means walking away from the investment in small businesses, more affordable housing options, and wealth-building opportunities for working families.

The answer to the risk of displacement is not to withhold investment. It is to invest with the community.

The Blue Line Extension was once planned to run down Olson Memorial Highway in Near North Minneapolis. That plan included safety improvements on the highway corridor, none of which materialized after the plan was abandoned, but speculative investments led to displacement. We carried these lessons into our work to Bring Back 6th, a community-led initiative to reconnect Near North and create local economic opportunity by returning Olson Highway to a neighborhood-scale street. We urge you to take community-led decision making into consideration, building projects while meaningfully engaging residents and prioritizing investment for and by them, with protections for communities to stay in place.

Building differently means prioritizing transformative multimodal projects like the Blue Line Extensions and honoring our state and local commitments to the project and the communities it serves. Building differently also means engaging residents early and continuously, protecting people from displacement before land values rise rather than after, and securing durable community benefits that measurably improve lives.

These are not obstacles to the project. They are what make the project worth building for the people who live here now.

We urge you to support the Blue Line Extension project, close the funding gap, and see this project through to deliver frequent, affordable, and accessible service—with local communities alongside you at every step.

Publicly commit to a funding plan and timeline for the federal application this summer.

Sincerely,



José A. Zayas Cabán
Executive Director
Our Streets