

TRANSIT for Livable Communities



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October 25, 2011

Hennepin County Commissioner Peter McLaughlin
Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority
A2400 Government Center
300 S. 6th Street
Minneapolis, MN 55487-0241

Dear Commissioner McLaughlin:

Transit for Livable Communities wholeheartedly supports Hennepin County and the City of Saint Paul's application for a TIGER grant to fund the Minneapolis Interchange (multi-modal transit facility) and the Dale Street Bridge project – a key bicycle and pedestrian connection in Saint Paul.

As the region's leading community voice for building a 21st century transit system and the administrator of the federal program Bike Walk Twin Cities, we recognize the critical contributions these projects will make toward creating a more energy-efficient, sustainable, equitable, and economically competitive region.

Bus and train ridership, bicycling, and walking are all on the rise in the Twin Cities. The public eagerly awaits the growing system of light rail and continued expansion of options for non-motorized travel.

The Minneapolis Interchange is integral to managing congestion in downtown Minneapolis, especially as the downtown adds workers and residents. The Interchange will ensure efficient connections between transit lines and key destinations in Minneapolis. It will serve the more than 100,000 daily travelers using trains, buses, cars and non-motorized travel modes into downtown. The Interchange project also will leverage economic development opportunities and increase the energy efficiency of the transportation system in the Twin Cities, reducing emissions and improving air quality.

Saint Paul's Dale street bridge project over Interstate 94 is within walking distance of Transit for Livable Communities' office, so our staff and members are keenly aware of the deficiencies that exist today. In addition to a high volume of automobile traffic, Dale Street has regular route bus service. The high degree of traffic congestion on the bridge makes it dangerous for people walking or bicycling across. Dale Street is a key north/south route and it is a key connector to the proposed Central Corridor Light Rail line and to the

northern suburbs. The bridge is located in an economically distressed area of Saint Paul and is adjacent to an elementary school and a senior housing complex. The proposed Dale Street bridge project would greatly improve safety and access for people walking or bicycling and would provide key connections to transit.

These two projects represent the innovative ways that transportation investments can improve access to jobs, increase affordability of transportation and housing, create new jobs and spur economic development, and reduce energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions. Both projects are also extremely timely, given the 2014 completion date of the Central Corridor LRT and pressing safety concerns at both locations. Both projects contribute to the on-going success of the Energy Innovation Corridor, a project to attract green industry and alternative energy use along the Central Corridor LRT line. And both projects improve livability by positively integrating with nearby neighborhoods and by expanding transportation options for people of all incomes and levels of mobility.

Transit for Livable Communities is very pleased to support this TIGER Grant proposal from Hennepin County and the City of Saint Paul, in cooperation with the Corridors of Opportunities regional partners. We are confident this project will provide near-term job creation, and long-term economic, environmental and social benefits to our metropolitan region, while also demonstrating important innovations that can be transferred to other metropolitan regions across the nation.

Sincerely,



Barbara J. Thoman
Executive Director