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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-2306

June 4, 2009

The Honorable Ray LaHood
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Secretary LaHood,

Please find enclosed a resolution recently passed by the St. Cloud Area Planning Organization (APO) regarding its intention to seek Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) capital assistance grant funding to extend the Northstar Corridor commuter service from Big Lake to St. Cloud, Minnesota. This project is considered vital to the economic growth and vitality of the region by all the community and business leaders.

The corridor between St. Cloud and the Twin Cities is one of tremendous growth, even now. The City of St. Cloud and the surrounding communities continue to thrive and attract new families and businesses alike. In fact, over the next 25 years, St. Cloud is expected to grow faster than any other region in Minnesota. Current population projections suggest that more than 1 million people will relocate to the area during that time. Extending the Northstar Corridor to include an intercity passenger rail connection from Big Lake to St. Cloud could ease potential traffic and commuter issues that may result from this rising population.

The St. Cloud APO has been an active participant in Minnesota's Intercity Passenger Rail Transportation Forum, a group of local representatives committed to working with the Minnesota Department of Transportation to recommend and develop rail projects. The Forum is also coordinating with seven other Midwest states to ensure their grant applications for this funding are competitive and meet the FRA's requirements. This effort is a testament to the APO's strong support for this project.

As a result of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009 and the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act (PRIIA) of 2008, more than \$12 billion for capital assistance grants will be made available for transportation projects, including intercity passenger rail. The Northstar Corridor extension project from Big Lake to St. Cloud fits this eligibility criterion and I urge you to give their application full consideration.

Please do not hesitate to contact me or my Legislative Director, Jessica Taylor, should you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Michele Bachmann
Member of Congress