



October 10, 2011

The Honorable Chip Cravaack
508 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Cravaack:

On behalf of the Minneapolis to Duluth/Superior Passenger Rail Alliance, we are writing to express our concern over recent remarks attributed to you in the media regarding the Northern Lights Express (NLX) passenger rail project.

Minnesota Public Radio News reports that you don't support spending money on a venture that can't pay for itself.

These remarks do not accurately reflect either the viability of NLX or the benefits it will bring to the rail corridor and State.

There are factual errors in your recent media coverage that suggest we haven't done a good enough job providing you project information. It hasn't been from a lack of trying on our part, as we have made many offers to provide additional information to you and your staff.

We renew the request made in our June 8, 2011 letter to you (attached). Please request NLX be authorized for federal rail capital funds in the successor to SAFETEA-LU. We do not believe that authorizing the route which would still have to compete for grants or future appropriations constitutes an "earmark." It does, however, make clear that NLX qualifies to apply for grants and future appropriations. Congress has authorized transportation projects without attaching funding in previous authorization bills.

NLX has received over \$6 million from the Federal Railroad Administration. The State of Minnesota has designated \$10 million for the project, which is included as a priority project in the State of Minnesota Passenger Rail Plan. This support demonstrates that those charged with passenger rail development at the Federal and State levels believe that work on NLX should progress.

We remain fully committed to NLX and renew our repeated requests that you allow us to present the strong case justifying NLX to you. We hope that you will join us as a partner in advancing this important transportation option.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Steve Raukar', written over a white background.

Steve Raukar
NLX Alliance Chair

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Mark Stenglein', written over a white background.

Mark Stenglein
NLX Alliance Vice-Chair

Minneapolis-Duluth/Superior Passenger Rail Alliance

Administrative Agency: St. Louis & Lake Counties Regional Railroad Authority
Executive Director Bob Manzoline, 111 Station 44 Road, Eveleth, MN 55734
Phone: (218) 744-1388 * Toll free: (877) 637-2241



June 8, 2011

Congressman Chip Cravaack
508 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Cravaack:

We appreciate the opportunity to review the details of our long-term plan to establish high-speed passenger rail between Duluth and Minneapolis. The Northern Lights Express will return passenger rail between these two great cities, provide economic opportunities in the many communities and counties along the corridor, and greatly improve freight capacity for the private sector.

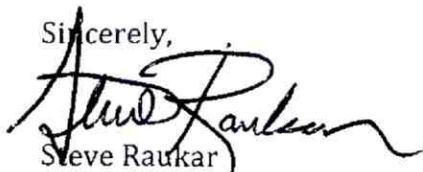
We remain available to answer any questions you may have on the project. Our NLX team also took the opportunity to brief your Washington, DC legislative staff on the details of our studies and work over the last several years. As you know, NLX has received \$5 million from the Federal Railroad Administration that will be part of a \$9 million effort to advance engineering and environmental work. Under the Pawlenty Administration, and continuing under Governor Dayton, \$10 million of state money has been designated for NLX. Further, NLX is a priority project in the State of Minnesota Passenger Rail Plan and has received development resources from Congress and the FRA.

The next major step for NLX is to be a designated and authorized passenger rail project in the surface transportation authorization bill moving forward in this Congress. We specifically seek your support and sponsorship for this provision and report language. This is not an earmark of federal funds for NLX; it is an authorization of NLX as a designated route between Duluth and Minneapolis. We have attached draft report and authorization language for your review.

In addition, we have asked Senators Franken and Klobuchar to sponsor this initiative in the US Senate, as well as requested Congressman Ellison to do the same in the House, as his district represents the southern terminus of the NLX project.

We look forward to your support and assistance with this important project for Minnesota and the 8th Congressional District.

Sincerely,


Steve Raukar
St. Louis County Commissioner
NLX Chair


Mark Stenglein
Hennepin County Commissioner
NLX Vice-chair

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AMENDMENT TO THE RAIL TITLE
SAFETEA-LU REAUTHORIZATION

2011

STATUTORY PROVISION

“Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the route from Duluth, Minnesota through Superior, Wisconsin to Minneapolis, Minnesota is authorized for federal rail capital funds provided by this title.”

COMMITTEE REPORT LANGUAGE

A Level I Corridor Assessment was conducted by the Northern Lights Express High Speed Passenger Rail project and the route approved by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) is hereby authorized for such funding. The Committee directs the FRA to provide priority consideration of discretionary rail funding requests for this corridor.