

May 18, 2016

Speaker Daudt:

As mayor of the City of St. Louis Park, I want you to know that our elected officials and our community have supported the Green Line extension for years. We have committed extraordinary staff resources and time to planning for this transportation project, not to mention committing millions of dollars in city funding.

As a result, we are already seeing the benefits of the expected station locations in our community through redevelopment and proposed redevelopment, all of which contributes to the economic vitality of St. Louis Park, the region, and the state.

As such, it's disappointing to see that those charged with leading our state into the future have presented a transportation proposal with no funding for transit, and that you would unilaterally presume that constituents aren't in support of this project. All along the line, we hear quite the opposite, and we know residents throughout the region have already contacted your office to voice their support for this project.

Further, I am concerned with the underlying assumptions of the argument that because "too few people use transit" it is not a wise investment. We cannot build enough roads to meet the coming demand in the region and so transit, including light rail, is a necessary component of a comprehensive transportation system. Additionally, passing a transportation bill including the Green Line extension results in taking cars off the roads and frees up dollars to be spent on roads and invests in transit in other areas of the state. If we were to play out the logic in your statement, that we should only build for existing and highest use, no roads would be built or repaired in greater Minnesota where traffic volumes are low. Instead we'd focus all our funds on high-volume metro roads like Hwy. 100, or I-35E, or the Crosstown. I simply don't agree with that philosophy. If applied to our transportation budget as a whole, the end result would be one that would be disastrous for the future of greater Minnesota.

My family grew up in Tracy, Minnesota, and I have spent a great deal of my work and leisure time throughout the state. I will tell you that I, and many of those who live in the Metro area, know that a strong greater Minnesota is good for the Metro area and a strong Metro area is good for greater Minnesota. This manifests itself directly in Local Government Aid and general fund dollars that are spent throughout the state to build road culverts, fire stations, and other needed infrastructure. It's a false assumption to think that any city in Minnesota can thrive when entire areas of the state are economically isolated from one another.

In closing, I am asking you to exercise your leadership on behalf of St. Louis Park, and Tracy, and Zimmerman, and yes, Minneapolis and St. Paul, as you enter these final days of the legislative session. All Minnesotans are counting on you and I'm confident you will do what is in all our best interests.

Regards,



Mayor Jake Spano
City of St. Louis Park