

## Appendix C. Public Comment Letters and Thematic Responses to Tier 2 Project Level EA

## Comments from the Public and Summary Responses

### Guide to Appendix C

Appendix C contains comments and responses to comments received from the public on the Northern Lights Express Tier 2 Environmental Assessment (EA) during the public comment period, held from April 24 to May 24, 2017 (see Appendix B for comments and responses to comments from public agencies). Appendix C includes four parts:

- Part 1: Comment Coding: Includes a summary of the comment intake and coding process.
- Part 2: Summary of Comments and Responses to Comments from the Public: Includes a summary of all public comments received, and responses by theme.
- Part 3: Public Comment Summary Table: Includes an index of all comments received, including the assigned communication number, commenter's name, organization, and the coding of their comments (i.e., themes and issues on which they commented).
- Part 4: All Public Comments and Coding: Contains a copy of all public comments received, as well as the coding of those comments, by theme and issue, as described in Appendix C, Part 1.

Comments from the public were not responded to individually, but instead, responses by theme were developed to address each comment. Comment responses by theme, including the theme code, are included in Part 2 of this Appendix. The theme codes assigned to each comment are shown in Parts 3 and 4 of this Appendix.

## Appendix C, Part 1: Comment Coding

This section includes a description of the public comment intake and coding process. All communications (i.e., written comments and public testimony) from the public on the Northern Lights Express Tier 2 Environmental Assessment (EA) during the public comment period were reviewed and considered as part of the Finding of No Significant Impacts (FONSI) development process. The following is a summary of the comment coding process:

1. Communication number: Each communication was assigned a unique communication number in chronological order, as it was received.
2. Alpha code: Communications were then assigned one or more 'alpha' codes to identify the total number of discrete comments within each communication (e.g., 'A' for the first comment, 'B' for the second comment, etc.).
3. Theme and issue: Finally, each comment was assigned a theme and issue code, generally based on the Environmental Assessment (EA) sections and subsections (see Figure 1).

The coding described above was applied to each of the public comments received and is summarized in Appendix C, Part 3: Comment Summary Table, and shown in Appendix C, Part 4: All Public Comments and Coding. The following are examples of typical comment coding:

- **1-A-03-2** – This would reflect the first letter received, first comment, transportation theme, transit issue area.
- **59-C-04-1** – This would reflect the 59th letter received, third comment in letter, environmental theme, land cover and land use issue area.
- **120-D-06-1** – This would reflect the 120th letter received, fourth comment in letter, non-substantive comment.

**Table 1: Theme and Issue Codes**

Theme	Issue
01: Purpose and Need	N/A
02: Alternatives	1: Decision Making Process 2: Stations 3: Layover/Maintenance Facilities 4: Infrastructure Improvements 5: Grade Crossings 6: Operations
03: Transportation	1: Freight and Passenger Rail Operations 2: Transit 3: Traffic Circulation in Station Communities 4: Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities
04: Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences	1: Land Use and Land Cover 2: Right of Way 3: Vegetation and Wildlife 4: Threatened and Endangered Species 5: Wetlands 6: Surface Water 7: Groundwater 8: Air Quality 9: Noise and Vibration 10: Contaminated Properties and Regulated Waste 11: Cultural Resources 12: Farmland and Soils 13: Parks and Recreation Areas 14: Visual 15: Socioeconomics (includes safety and security) 16: Environmental Justice 17: Economics 18: Indirect and Cumulative Effects
05: Public and Agency Involvement	N/A
06: Non-substantive	1: General Support of Project 2: General Opposition to Project 3: Administrative Correction

## Appendix C, Part 2: Summary of Comments and Responses to Comments Received from the Public

The Northern Lights Express Tier 2 Environmental Assessment (EA) was available for public review from April 24 to May 24, 2017. During the 30-day comment period, MnDOT received 32 communications including eight emails, 15 written communications submitted at public hearings, and nine testimonies made to a court reporter at the three public meetings on the EA. Within the 32 public communications there were 69 unique comments. Table 2 includes a summary of the number of comments received by theme:

**Table 2: Summary of comments received.**

Code	Theme/Issue	Number of Comments
06-1	General Support	21
06-2	General Opposition	4
02-3	Build Alternative – Maintenance Facility	4
02-4	Build Alternative – Infrastructure Improvements	2
02-6	Build Alternative – Operations	11
02-7	Build Alternative – Safety	7
03-1	Passenger Rail Operations	2
03-4	Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities	2
04-9	Noise and Vibration	5
04-17	Economics	5
05	Public and Agency Involvement	2
Not Applicable	Individual Comments (an individual comment which doesn't fit into one of the themes above)	4
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>69</b>

## **06: General Support and Opposition**

Twenty-one comments were made that reflected general support for the project while four comments expressed general opposition. Of the comments in support, people indicated that the NLX Project would help connect people to destinations while decreasing car usage along I-35 between Minneapolis and Duluth. Several commenters said they would be happy to see more transportation options along the proposed route; one commenter stated that they were in support of rail projects like this since public transportation is in short supply while another said that they cannot drive so the NLX Project would allow them to travel between Minneapolis and Duluth unassisted.

People in opposition stated that the NLX Project would be a waste of public funds and that a passenger rail along this corridor would have little demand or practicality. One person proposed that funding for the NLX Project be instead allocated to small towns along the proposed rail corridor rather than have the NLX Project move forward.

### **02-3: Build Alternative – Maintenance Facility**

Four comments were made regarding the proposed maintenance facility location along the NLX route with all four indicating a preference for a facility in the City of Sandstone. Commenters reasoned that a maintenance facility in Sandstone would generate job growth. In addition, one commenter stated that the location of Sandstone, halfway between Duluth and the Twin Cities, would be an ideal site for a maintenance facility.

**Response:** MnDOT will retain both the Sandstone and Duluth maintenance facility sites for further evaluation when the NLX Project is funded for final design and construction. Both sites meet the project need and have been evaluated for environmental effects, however, MnDOT and FRA are not selecting a maintenance facility at this time. The agencies will continue to evaluate train schedule and operational and cost refinements, with review by BNSF, and will select one of the sites during final design. MnDOT and FRA would undertake further environmental evaluation if new or expanded environmental impacts are identified through operational or cost refinements or in final design.

### **02-4: Build Alternative – Infrastructure Improvements**

Two comments were made regarding infrastructure improvements for the proposed NLX Project. One person was concerned with the state of the existing tracks near their property and stated that stretches were missing the “L” connectors in between tracks. The other comment stated that the NLX Project team had correctly assessed where infrastructure improvements were to be made.

**Response:** Evaluation of the existing track condition is not part of the Tier 2 EA NLX Project. The BNSF track is inspected and maintained on a regular basis by qualified BNSF, state and federal staff according to FRA safety

standards. The standards that an inspector uses to determine if there are problems that need correcting are not only specified by the railroad but are also mandated by the FRA. Inspectors use sophisticated track inspection equipment that can determine if the track meets FRA quality standards. Railroad, state and FRA inspectors inspect track by both driving/riding over the track and physically walking the track.

The most recent FRA inspection (October 16, 2017) using a ‘geometry car’ determined that the BNSF track meets the criteria for mainline track (FRA Class 4). Other federal and state inspections occurred on March 23, 2017; April 11-12, 2017; and June 6, 2017. The June 6 inspection was conducted in direct response to the comment expressing concern about track condition. The inspector walked the track and determined that the track in the vicinity of the commenter’s property was in very good condition with nearly new rail, no missing spikes or rail anchors and evidence that a significant proportion of the existing ties will be replaced later this summer.

As part of the NLX Project, MnDOT will continue to work with the BNSF Railway and the FRA to upgrade the track to meet design and quality standards for high-speed mainline track, which would permit passenger trains to operate at speeds up to 90 mph (FRA Class 5).

## **02-6: Build Alternative – Operations**

Eleven comments were received related to the operations of the proposed NLX Project, and the definition of the Build Alternative. Some people suggested increasing stops along the corridor; one person asked for a general increase in stations in small towns along the proposed line, one person recommended a loading and unloading platform in Braham, and one suggested a station in Sandstone. Other comments asked for electronic ticket dispensers to decrease the amount of staff needed at each station and suggested that passengers transport their vehicles on the train. One person stated that the cost estimates for the project were unrealistic and large subsidies would be required to make NLX happen. The same person also mentioned that it would be cheaper to drive than take the train and stated that the proposed operator of the NLX service would be insufficient (the commenter assumed Amtrak would operate NLX).

**Response:** Throughout the Tier 1 EA and Tier 2 EA processes, MnDOT conducted a thorough cost-benefit analysis of NLX operating plans that balanced capital and operating costs and benefits related to travel cost savings, safety improvements and emissions savings for automobile travelers; operating cost savings, emissions savings and inventory savings for freight rail; grade crossing improvements; and economic development. The number and location of station stops are critical factors considered in the trade-off between maintaining competitive travel time (fewer stops) and strong ridership (selecting station stops with the highest ridership potential) that is attracted by competitive travel time and costs. MnDOT determined that the selected six NLX stations throughout the corridor best serve the travel market and maintains economic feasibility of the service.

The NLX stations would include electronic ticket dispensers. Each station is designed to provide access to all transportation modes, including taxis and transit. Purchasing train cars for vehicles is not a cost-effective investment at this time.

The NLX Project capital and operating cost estimates were developed using accepted and proven cost estimating methodologies, consistent with FRA guidance. The cost estimates were conservatively developed and include contingencies to account for additional costs that may occur during final design and construction.

The NLX Project ridership estimates account for travelers who will prefer to drive versus taking a train. The NLX service is designed to be a competitive travel option in both time and cost for those who cannot or choose not to use a personal auto.

The operator of the NLX service is undetermined at this time. If Amtrak is the selected operator, it would provide trained and qualified personnel to operate the NLX service in an active freight rail corridor, similar to other intrastate services across the country.

## **02-7: Build Alternative – Safety**

Seven comments related to the safety of the proposed NLX Project were received. Commenters were concerned with potential derailment, possible flying debris from the train, wildlife encounters, and pedestrian safety. Two commenters were concerned specifically with safety in the City of Braham and stated that trains pass near homes and Freedom Park. One of the Braham commenters has a home and business near the existing rail and was concerned for their safety, being near the proposed project. The other Braham commenter was concerned with safety in Freedom Park, a Park used annually for local events that draw large crowds.

**Response:** Please see the response to comments about infrastructure improvements. The NLX Project will operate in BNSF right of way, which will be maintained by BNSF. BNSF regularly inspects and maintains the track to maintain safe operating conditions. Flying debris may be associated with open freight rail cars, which would not occur with the NLX service. Fencing will be provided in areas of high pedestrian activity, including the City of Braham. MnDOT will improve public grade crossings throughout the NLX Project corridor, including in the City of Braham, to benefit public safety. Within the City of Braham, two crossings will be reconstructed with quad gates and one crossing will be reconstructed with a dual gate and median. Although NLX trains will operate at maximum track speed through communities as a general practice, MnDOT will consider slowing speeds on a case by case basis for special events at specific locations, and would coordinate with local communities for such events.

### 03-1: Passenger Rail Operations

Two comments focused on the proposed passenger rail operations of NLX. One commenter questioned the high speeds at which NLX trains would be operating through their town without stopping or slowing down. The other comment requested the project team stress the connections that NLX would make with Amtrak during daily operations.

**Response:** Please see response to comments about safety and infrastructure improvements. The NLX Project will provide convenient connections to other modes of travel at Target Field Station in Minneapolis. The Amtrak Empire Builder service stops at St. Paul Union Depot. Travelers wishing to make connections between NLX and Amtrak service would be able to take the Green Line light rail service or a taxi.

### 03-4: Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities

Two comments focused on the bicycle and pedestrian facilities associated with the proposed NLX Project. One comment requested that paved bicycle paths be considered parallel to the tracks to connect to the nearest stations for small cities. The other comment requested an off-road bicycle trail be constructed from Braham to Cambridge to access the proposed Cambridge station.

**Response:** Constructing a new bike route is outside the scope of the NLX Project. The stations provide bike access that connect to local street networks. Existing local road networks and trails can accommodate bikes throughout the NLX Project corridor. There are roads identified on the Isanti County bicycle map <http://dot.state.mn.us/bike/maps/county/isanti.pdf> that indicate access between Braham and Cambridge.

### 04-9: Noise and Vibration

Five comments were made regarding disturbances caused by noise and vibration of the proposed train. A few of the comments requested quiet zones in all communities along the proposed route and two were specific to the City of Braham. One of the Braham commenters was concerned with disturbances to structures in the City of Braham caused by vibration from the nearby rail and stated that there is a historic Gazebo that may be disturbed in Freedom Park in Braham.

**Response:** Section 4.9.4.1 of the Tier 2 EA notes the majority of potential NLX Project noise impact is associated with horn blowing, which can be mitigated with local communities applying for Quiet Zones through FRA's Office of Safety. MnDOT has and will continue coordination with local communities regarding the NLX Project, including providing information for communities to apply for Quiet Zone designations as noted in Section 4.9.4.1. The grade crossing improvements that the NLX Project will carry out, which include installing gates and flashers, will help position communities to apply for Quiet Zones.

Potential mitigation options for residual noise impacts are also discussed in Section 4.9.4.1 of the Tier 2 EA. When the NLX Project is funded for final design and construction and before any final decision is made regarding noise mitigation at a residential building in Minneapolis and Freedom Park in Braham, MnDOT will conduct a site-specific 24-hour existing noise measurement to determine more precise noise conditions and if residual noise can be mitigated. The residual severe noise impact at Freedom Park in Braham could potentially be mitigated with a noise barrier, but may not be feasible due to its proximity to the track.

As discussed in Section 4.9.3.2 in the Tier 2 EA, the NLX Project would not create vibration impacts within the City of Braham.

#### **04-17: Economic Impact**

Five comments related to the economic impact of the NLX project were received. One comment was focused on providing equal allocation of federal funding to urban and rural communities while one questioned whether the proposed project will generate enough commuters to be economically viable. Another commenter was worried about the negative impacts on the City of Braham's property values. One commenter had two comments in support of the potential economic benefits of rail both to Northern Minnesota and to Minnesota as a State in attracting business and talent within a national context.

**Response:** The NLX service is intended as intercity passenger rail, and not planned as a commuter service. Funding for the NLX Project is not currently identified and would be separate from other existing funding sources allocated to subsidize transportation infrastructure and services in urban and rural communities. Section in 4.17.3.2 in the Tier 2 EA discusses the economic benefit of the NLX Project construction and operation. Maintaining the NLX Project within an existing active railroad corridor minimizes economic disruption. Within the City of Braham, two crossings will be reconstructed with quad gates and one crossing will be reconstructed with a dual gate and median to improve safety and enhance access for the business community and its patrons.

#### **05: Public and Agency Involvement**

Two comments were made regarding the public and agency involvement during the NLX project. One comment questioned the results of the Travel Behavior survey and asked specifically about the percentage of respondents who answered that they would choose to take a car in the survey scenarios. The other comment was critical of the locations of the open houses during the public involvement stage of the project. The commenter thought open houses were only being held in communities that would benefit from the NLX Project, if it were built, while other towns that did not stand to benefit from the proposed project were not being engaged in the conversation.

**Response:** MnDOT conducted a Travel Behavior survey between February 12 and March 24, 2014 to elicit both qualitative and quantitative information from travelers who currently make private vehicle (car, van, truck, SUV) or intercity bus (Greyhound, Skyline) trips within the study corridor. The specific goals of the Travel Behavior survey included (1) Collecting trip pattern information about the markets served by the corridor to gain insight on profiles of travelers, (2) Developing an understanding of how people make choices between different modes of transportation based on attitudinal questions; and (3) Collecting willingness to pay for travel time savings information based on stated preference scenarios. The information collected from the survey was one source of information used to develop forecasting model inputs for the Twin Cities to Duluth Northern Lights Express (NLX) ridership and revenue study.

Although the survey was designed to be administered to a pre-paid panel of residents who live in the corridor, the survey was open to all corridor travelers by intercepting potential travelers at key locations along the corridor, by advertising the survey on local websites and social media, by distributing postcard invitations and by sending email invitations to enter the survey. A link to the survey was posted on the MnDOT website so that anyone who wished could complete the survey. A total of 3,300 completed surveys were received from a sample of corridor residents and corridor travelers. Only individuals who stated that they had completed trips in the previous six months completed the survey.

- Almost 1,000 responses were obtained from the pre-paid panel of residents maintained by the market research firm TNS;
- About 100 responses came from direct intercepts of corridor residents and visitors at various locations along the corridor, including Mall of America, Miller Hill Mall, UMD and the Arena in Duluth;
- A little more than 600 responses were collected from the online advertisement of the survey on the Mall of America and Miller Hill Mall websites and social media pages; and
- Finally, more than 1,500 responses were collected through MnDOT, using both its website and email invitations to advertise the online survey.

The survey included questions about trips made within the corridor in the last 6 months (e.g. mode, travel time, cost, party size); questions related to how an individual would get to or leave a station; ten questions asking the respondent to make a choice between two alternatives (driving/taking a bus or using the NLX Service) under varying conditions of cost and travel time; and a question asking respondents if they would make trips using NLX that they would otherwise not make without the NLX Service. The proposal for a rail service between the Twin Cities and Duluth was supported by 88% of respondents; only 8% of the respondents indicated they were against the idea. More than 70% of the respondents indicated that they would probably use the rail service, assuming quicker and reliable travel time. As expected, the survey demonstrated that the likelihood someone would ride the train was based primarily on cost and travel time.

MnDOT has engaged with numerous communities and local officials within the NLX Project corridor throughout the NLX Project development process, starting during the Tier 1 EA and continuing through and

beyond the Tier 2 EA studies. Section 5 of the Tier 2 EA describes the public engagement process, which includes meetings within individual communities in addition to the public open house meetings. MnDOT will continue to be available to meet with communities to discuss the project and answer questions.

### **Individual Comments (Not Thematic)**

In addition to the thematic comments summarized above, the following comments were also made by individuals:

- One person commented on how the NLX Project provides service to wealthier communities while having significant negative impacts on property values in low-income communities.

**Response:** As discussed in Section 4.16.2.2 of the Tier 2 EA, the NLX Project also serves communities with lower income populations, notably Hinckley, Duluth and Superior, Wisconsin. The NLX Project would operate in an existing active freight rail corridor and no additional significant adverse impacts are anticipated due to the operation of NLX trains. Section 4.17.3 of the Tier 2 EA identifies potential economic benefits of the NLX Project.

- One person commented that the alternatives analysis was missing the addition of a third lane on I-35 in each direction from Forest Lake to Duluth.

**Response:** Adding a third lane to I-35 would not meet the project purpose and need, which includes improving statewide intermodal connectivity, particularly in small cities and rural areas with limited travel options.

- One person was concerned about the proposed placement of the Foley Boulevard Station in Coon Rapids and stated that it would be preferable to design the station so that it can accommodate another track without moving the platform or impacting adjacent properties at a later time.

**Response:** The Coon Rapids station is designed to accommodate another track.

- One person believes riders are less concerned with high speed and more concerned with reliable and regular transportation.

**Response:** The NLX Project would provide a reliable and regular travel option. As discussed in Section 1.4.3 of the Tier 2 EA, traffic congestion, particularly in the Twin Cities will continue to worsen, which negatively impacts travel time and reliability. Anticipated funding for roadway projects will not be adequate to address congestion and reliability problems. The NLX Project and its connections to other transit modes provides an option for reliable travel times.

## Appendix C, Part 3: Public Comment Summary Table

The following table includes an index of all public comments received, including the assigned communication number<sup>1</sup>, commenter's name, organization, and the coding of their comments (i.e., themes on which they commented).

<sup>1</sup> The communication numbers are not sequential. Communication numbers were assigned to all communications chronologically, as they were received. This included comments from both the public and from public agencies. Comments from public agencies are not included in this table (see Appendix C).

Internal Comment Summary																				
Communication Number	Name	Date Received	Type of Comment (email, mail, public meeting, phone, testimony)	Agency Comment (yes/no)	Number of Comments	Section 2.1: Decision Making Process	Section 2.2: Stations	Section 2.3: Layover/Maintenance Facilities	Section 2.4: Infrastructure Improvements	Section 2.6: Operations	Section 2.7: Safety	Section 3.1: Freight and Passenger Rail Operations	Section 3.2: Transit	Section 3.4: Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities	Section 4.9: Noise and Vibration	Section 4.16: Environmental Justice	Section 4.17: Economics	Section 5: Public and Agency Involvement	Section 6.1: General Support of Project	Section 6.2: General Opposition to Project
1	Greg Kern	4/25/17	Email	No	4					1				1	1		1			
2	Greg Kern	5/11/17	Email	No	6	1				1				1	1	1		1		
3	Lowell W. Jaques	5/15/17	Email	No	6					3			1				1			1
4	Steven Palmer	5/16/17	Public Meeting	No	1			1												
5	Valerie Palmer	5/16/17	Public Meeting	No	2			1									1			
6	Leana Jackson	5/16/17	Public Meeting	No	2			1												1
7	Jean Wiseheart	5/16/17	Public Meeting	No	1															1
8	Connie Hansen	5/16/17	Public Meeting	No	1															1
9	Dennis Jensen	5/17/17	Public Meeting	No	1															1
10	Private Citizen	5/17/17	Public Meeting	No	4					4										
11	Hadrian DeMaioribus	5/17/17	Public Meeting	No	1															1
12	Nick Demaioribus	5/17/17	Public Meeting	No	1															1
13	Lawrence (Larry) Hunt	5/17/17	Public Meeting	No	1															1
14	Tom Swafford	5/17/17	Public Meeting	No	1															1
15	Aaron Kelly	5/17/17	Public Meeting	No	1															1
16	Jean Southworth	5/17/17	Public Meeting	No	4				1		2				1					
17	Michael Hicks	5/18/17	Public Meeting	No	3		1			1										1
18	John Haggerty	5/18/17	Public Meeting	No	1															1
20	Tish Carlson	5/21/17	Email	No	6						2	1			1			1		1
21	Lisa Krahn	5/22/17	Email	No	1															1
24	Fran Levings	5/24/17	Testimony	No	1															1
25	David Baker	5/24/17	Testimony	No	1															1
26	Paula Siltberg	5/24/17	Testimony	No	2			1												1
27	Judy Duncan	5/24/17	Testimony	No	1															1
28	Brandon Jenny	5/24/17	Testimony	No	1															1
29	Brent Krist	5/24/17	Testimony	No	1															1
30	John Haggerty	5/24/17	Testimony	No	1															1
31	Harley Hanson	5/30/17	Testimony	No	1															1
32	Paul Qualy	5/30/17	Testimony	No	4				1								2			1
33	Jean Wiseheart	5/24/17	Email	No	2					1		1								
37	Patrick Schifferdecker	5/24/17	Email	No	1															1
40	Helen Nestrud	5/24/17	Email	No	5						3				1					1
				<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>4</b>

## Appendix C, Part 4: All Public Comments and Coding

This section includes copies of all public comments received, as well as the coding of those comments, by theme, as described in Appendix C, Part 1.

## Communication #1

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**From:** Greg Kern [<mailto:gkern3006@hotmail.com>]

**Sent:** Tuesday, April 25, 2017 4:19 PM

**To:** [cityhall@braham.com](mailto:cityhall@braham.com)

**Subject:** WEBSITE CONTACT from Greg Kern

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### Name

Greg Kern

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### Address

1001 Lincoln Cir

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### Contact Number

3203960367

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### E-mail

[gkern3006@hotmail.com](mailto:gkern3006@hotmail.com)

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### How can we assist you?

- 1-A-04-17** The NLX Tier 2 EA is out - see NLX website for details. This project could have significant negative impacts on Braham property values. Do not approve/permit the project unless they do at least the following:
- 1-B-04-9** 1) Establish Quiet Zone for Braham and surrounding area before project construction.
- 1-C-03-4** 2) Construct an off-road bike trail from Braham to Cambridge to get to the NLX Station.
- 1-D-02-6** 3) Construct a Load/Unload platform (not a Station) in Braham with a couple Friday/Sunday stops when there is passenger demand.

## Communication #2

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**From:** Greg Kern [mailto:gkern3006@hotmail.com]

**Sent:** Monday, May 08, 2017 8:17 PM

**To:** MN\_DOT\_NLX <NLX.DOT@state.mn.us>

**Subject:** NLX EA Comments

**2-A-04-16** This project could have significant negative impact on property values in the low-income small communities it will rumble through, all to provide another option for wealthy metro and twin ports residents. Instead of "railroading" these small communities, the project needs to provide the following to be fair:

**2-B-04-9** Quiet Zones established for all communities along the route prior to construction

**2-C-02-6** -if no Station in town, then have load/unload platforms with a few Friday/Sunday stops in small cities such as Braham and Sandstone

**2-D-03-4** -paved bike paths, perhaps parallel to the tracks, to the nearest station for these small cities.

**2-E-02-1** The Alternatives analysis is missing the most obvious alternative - adding a third lane to I-35 in each direction from Forest Lake to Duluth. It would be interesting to compare the people-moving capacity of this added lane to NLX, as well as the total cost and cost per passenger-mile.

**2-F-05** There was a potential rider survey done a while ago and the results don't seem to have been published - what percentage of responders answered they would take there car on every one of the scenarios in the survey?

### Communication #3

**From:** Lowell & Sharon Jaques [mailto:lwjaques@gmail.com]

**Sent:** Monday, May 15, 2017 2:46 PM

**To:** MN\_DOT\_NLX <NLX.DOT@state.mn.us>

**Subject:** Proposed NLX routing and schedule

Dear Sir,

It is to my dismay that the Northern Lights Express contemplated high speed rail project continues to move forward.

**3-A-06-2** I think that in its present form it is a waste of funds and a project with little demand and limited usefulness. I can understand giving roundtrip service from the Twin Cities to Hinckley that would have stops in all communities that previously had them between Hinckley

**3-B-02-6** and Minneapolis/St. Paul. I am sure that increased stops would increase ridership.

**3-C-03-2** It is my feeling that riders are less concerned about high speed and more concerned with reliable and regular transportation available. I doubt that there would be enough commuting

**3-D-04-17** beyond those parameters to make a longer route economically viable.

**3-E-02-6** With technology available, electronic ticket dispensers could take care of ticketing and there would not be a need for on site staff for that function. A no-frills shelter would suffice for waiting.

**3-F-02-6** In short, I am asking you to consider the mission for this project with regard to whom it is intended to serve. If it is to serve a population base in East Central Minnesota I would predict that more availability by adding stops would bring more acceptance to small cities like ours. In its present form there is no benefit to Braham. There are many drawbacks.

Sincerely,  
Lowell W. Jaques  
PO Box 65  
Braham, MN 55006

Steven Palmer  
Quality of Life Task Force, Sandstone  
522 Jefferson St., Sandstone, MN 55072  
[landofpoint@hotmail.com](mailto:landofpoint@hotmail.com)  
320-216-7007

I can see pros and cons for maintenance facility at either Duluth or Sandstone.  
We would love to see it in Sandstone to provide more job and growth potential to our already growing town.

4-A-02-3

It would also put the facility at ½ way point which might come in handy should there be any mechanical problems en-route.

Thanks for the great presentation. Looks like a great deal of work has gone in to it.

*Received: Sandstone Public Meeting – May 16, 2017*

Valerie Palmer  
Sandstone City Council  
522 Jefferson, Sandstone, MN.  
[Valeriep@sandstonemn.com](mailto:Valeriep@sandstonemn.com)  
320-216-7007

5-A-02-3 I hope that Sandstone remains as a strong alternative for a maintenance facility. It seems it would be beneficial to have a facility that is halfway between the Duluth Station and TC station for response to problems. I also feel there needs to be thought given to the growth a facility could bring to a rural area.

5-B-04-17 Consideration needs to be given to urban and rural growth when each federal monies are being spent and to the impact on quality of life it presents for a rural area and how it connects our citizens to the urban areas. Very well done presentation! Great seeing how it is being visualized with layover of plans on actual aerial photos.

*Received: Sandstone Public Meeting – May 16, 2017*

Leana Jackson  
City of Sandstone  
119 4<sup>th</sup> St., Sandstone, MN  
[administration@sandstonemn.com](mailto:administration@sandstonemn.com)  
320-245-5241

- 6-A-06-1 The Northern lights express would be a great addition to the corridor between the Twin Cities and Duluth. Public transportation is a resource that is in short supply in greater Minnesota even though those in greater Minnesota travel long distances for recreation, jobs and basic amenities. Having a
- 6-B-02-3 maintenance facility in Sandstone would bring jobs that are much needed to our area. It may not seem like the amount of jobs that it would create is that big of a deal but to a small community every job counts! Not only would the jobs created from a local facility have a great impact but the potential for a stop in the future in this area would help those that travel to the Twin Cities or Duluth. It may give them more time to be productive and may even help decrease the possibility of driver fatigue and accidents.

*Received: Sandstone Public Meeting – May 16, 2017*

Communication #7

Jean Wiseheart  
701 W. Superior St., Apt. 902, Duluth, MN 55802  
320-6642

**7-A-06-1** Now that I can't drive to the cities, I want to take the train there!

*Received: Duluth Public Meeting – May 17, 2017*

Communication #8

Connie Hansen  
Senior Citizen  
701 W. Superior St., Apt. 111, Duluth, MN 55802  
727-5999

8-A-06-1 I rode the train when I was a kid. Now I want to ride it again at 70 years old.

*Received: Duluth Public Meeting – May 17, 2017*

Communication #9

Dennis Jensen  
4219 W. Arrowhead Rd, Duluth, MN 55811  
218-343-5350

9-A-06-1 Very comprehensive plan. The addition of rail as an alternative transportation mode to the private auto would be a great environmental benefit. Impact on travel patterns would be greatly changed and valuable asset to the region and at communities along the corridor.

*Received: Duluth Public Meeting – May 17, 2017*

Private Citizen

- 10-A-02-6 • Fares will only cover 70% of costs, large subsidies required.
- Authority has no experience building a high-speed transit system.
- 10-B-02-6 • Proposed operator (Amtrak) is insufficient
- Time to final destination will be longer than by car
  - Wait for bus to visit relatives, college and businesses off of blue line
- 10-C-02-6 • Greater expense than by driving car [unreadable] of local transportation to final destination by bus, taxi or cost of business partner picking me up
- 10-D-02-6 • Cost estimate unrealistic
  - Cost of grade crossings update an \$250k in total estimate uses low estimate for 117grade crossings
- California high speed rail is 50% over cost estimate and 7 years behind schedule (and that is just for the easy part in the central valley)
- 80% of bullet trains have major cost over runs pen Oxford University, [unreadable]... BNSF track has stringent high-speed mandate of 50 mph. Total estimate does not include BNSF track upgrades, major upgrades will be required

*Received: Duluth Public Meeting – May 17, 2017*

Hadrian DeMaioribus  
2391 Woodland Ave  
[hadrian@fastmail.com](mailto:hadrian@fastmail.com)  
218-343-0868

- 11-A-06-1 I think this is a tremendous, exciting project and it's great to see the minimal environmental impact for an infrastructure project. Duluth's [unreadable] is built on infrastructure investment and trains and I think the region would be well served by rail travel. I wasn't born in Duluth and I don't think people who were born here understand how isolated Duluth is.

*Received: Duluth Public Meeting – May 17, 2017*

Communication #12

Nick Demaioribus  
2391 Woodland Ave  
[demaioribusn@gmail.com](mailto:demaioribusn@gmail.com)

As a university of Minnesota (Twin Cities) student, the train would be a really effective way of traveling to and from Duluth. It would be affordable, easy access between the train station and the light rail, know both would meet in the target field station. It would be cheap and quick and I could use it to stop at more areas than Jefferson Lines ordinarily covers.

12-A-06-1

*Received: Duluth Public Meeting – May 17, 2017*

Communication #13

Lawrence (Larry) Hunt  
[Larryhunt1958@gmail.com](mailto:Larryhunt1958@gmail.com)  
218-269-4500

13-A-06-1 I am a frequent MSP to Duluth traveler. Hinckley from both MSP and Duluth is an occasional destination. I look forward to riding the NLX!

*Received: Duluth Public Meeting – May 17, 2017*

Tom Swafford  
Utility Mapping Services (UMS)  
32947 E. Calram Rd STE. 206  
[tswafford@umsl.us](mailto:tswafford@umsl.us)  
218-228-8087

14-A-06-1 Frank, nice project! I'm in favor!

You'll have some utility risks to manage at the new station and maintenance sites – that's where we'll come in and help designate and locate and make 3D model the underground utilities as necessary. Keep us in mind when you get final design \$\$\$\$. We're prequalified of SUE on MnDOT, so we are ready to go. Good Meeting!

*Received: Duluth Public Meeting – May 17, 2017*

Aaron Kelly  
LHB Architects and Engineers  
21 West Superior St., Ste. 500, Duluth, MN 55802  
[Aaron.kelly@lhbcorp.com](mailto:Aaron.kelly@lhbcorp.com)  
218-279-2404

15-A-06-1 It costs me \$0.545/mile to drive to Minneapolis on average 1x per week =\$162 round trip and parking. It would save me significantly to take rail if I did and work en-route. As an architect, my work can be done on a laptop, which means my billing rate can be applied in my professional duties for 5 hours during the trip on NLX vs. 5+ hours of sitting behind the windshield creating no value with my time. Would love to participate in the design of the maintenance facility. Thanks!

*Received: Duluth Public Meeting – May 17, 2017*

Communication #16

Jean Southworth  
1222 County Rd 8, Holyoke, MN 55749  
[southworthj@msn.com](mailto:southworthj@msn.com)  
218-591-9218

- 16-A-02-4 I have walked the tracks that run through our property and the state of the tracks concern us. Many track stretches are missing the spikes – metal “L” connectors, old ties, deer (counted 11 on my way to
- 16-B-02-7 work today). Is the rail able to keep the passengers safe with wildlife encounters?
- 16-C-04-9 Coordinating the rail with BNSF? We will hear trains in our rural settings (why we moved there) six additional trains a day is beyond what we imagined would happen on these tracks. In rural areas where
- 16-D-02-7 health care is not minutes but many minutes away. Concerns regarding derailment and passenger safety.

*Received: Duluth Public Meeting – May 17, 2017*

Michael Hicks  
740 Victoria St. S, Apt. 330, St. Paul, MN 55102  
[Mulad6@gmail.com](mailto:Mulad6@gmail.com)  
612-703-3787

17-A-02-2 I am somewhat concerned about the proposed placement of the Coon Rapids Foley Boulevard station, since that could be impacted by a future project to add a third main track. It would be preferable to design the station so that it can accommodate another track without needing the platform to be moved or for nearby private property to be impacted. Ideally, the third main project should happen at the same time as this project is constructed, but I realize that the sequencing is dependent on funding availability.

17-B-06-1 I am happy to see that this project is expected to have minimal environmental impact. This is not surprising considering that it will be built primarily on land that is already dedicated to railroad use.

17-C-02-6 I think it would be best to include a stop in Sandstone, not just a maintenance facility.

*Received: Coon Rapids Public Meeting – May 18, 2017*

John Haggerty

18-A-06-1 Looking forward to another option to be able to travel to the Duluth/Superior Area.

*Received: Coon Rapids Public Meeting – May 18, 2017*

## Communication #20

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**From:** MILT and TISH CARLSON FENCE [mailto:tishywishy@msn.com]

**Sent:** Sunday, May 21, 2017 1:49 PM

**To:** MN\_DOT\_NLX <NLX.DOT@state.mn.us>

**Subject:** NLX project feedback

Dear Frank Loetterle,

I have attended several of your presentations about the NLX from the beginning of this project and I have great concerns for my town, its residents and our business owners.

- 20-A-03-1 1. Speed through our town: to fast, not slowing done and no stop (benefit to us?)
- 20-B-04-9 2. Vibrations and noise: building and houses that may be older, and our historic 92 year old gazebo in freedom park, no quite zones - unless the city pays for it! (benefit to us?)
- 20-C-02-7 3. Loss of residents and businesses: home and businesses owners living to close to tracks in the fear of a derailment, safety for children and pets - many would have to pay for fencing in there yards this may not be something they can afford (benefit to us?)
- 20-D-02-7 4. Freedom Park: Our historic 92 year old gazebo sits in this park as well as our veterans memorial, Freedom Park is one of our main parks in Braham, several events happen in this area over the year. Our biggest is Braham Pie Day-always the first Friday of Aug. we have craft vendors - entertainment - pie serving area - pie auction etc.. That day along brings an extra 6000 people on a average year to our town and into park that is next to the tracks. BNSF over the years has been very courteous to us and has sold down the trains that day and in that area for safety reasons!! Know can you see your self as a vendor or a guest standing in that park when there is a train passing by you at 90mph x 8. If there would have to be a fence put in for safety and it is on the BNSF right away we stand to lose part of our park!! (benefit to us?)

20-E-05 You keep hosting these open houses in towns that are already benefitting from the NLX if it gets it funding, have you forgot about the towns that don't benefit from the NLX coming!! - shouldn't those be the towns you are visiting!!

I read a letter, signed by all the parties dated March 14, 2017 that are getting stops in there towns and it talks about improving safety measures and economic opportunities. I guess your only doing that for the 6 areas it stops because again I see NO BENIFITS for US!!

20-F-06-2 I would rather see the funding you are request for the NLX go all these small towns that are struggling to fix old infrastructure, roads, bridges with our cities

and counties etc...

Tish Carlson

400 Circle Drive, Braham MN 55006

763-244-0450

Mayor of Braham

Service Unit Manager Braham Girl Scouts

Executive Director & Craft Fair Coordinator Braham Pie

President Pine City Blue Star Moms Chapter #16

## Communication #21

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**From:** Lisa K [mailto:[lisak@7countyseniors.com](mailto:lisak@7countyseniors.com)]  
**Sent:** Monday, May 22, 2017 8:28 AM  
**To:** MN\_DOT\_NLX <[NLX.DOT@state.mn.us](mailto:NLX.DOT@state.mn.us)>  
**Subject:** Comment from Sandstone EIS project meeting

Good morning.

This comment will get to you faster by email:

Lisa Krahn, resident of Pine County, 10929 Black Spruce Road, Pine City, MN 55063 (320) 629-3979

21-A-06-1

While the NLX is not a “local” or “milk” train that gets to stop at every hamlet or city in Pine County, it certainly will benefit the local residents. A glance at southbound I-35 from either Pine City exit (particularly southbound at 7AM on a weekday or any Sunday afternoon, or northbound anytime on a Friday) would assure the average driver that alternatives are welcome – it’s a nasty drive in heavy traffic!

The bulk of traffic is between the popular endpoints of this NLX line – Minneapolis and Duluth. There’s enough ridership potential there, so that the Hinckley stop is pure benefit: it would be the easy way north or south and it stops right there! Plus it is barrier-free for maximum accessibility – social justice!

I look forward to knowing when to get to Hinckley to pick up a guest or drop one off... and helping local modes of travel to connect: Uber, Arrowhead Transit, Attaboy’s Taxi, the veterans’ van or your next-door neighbor. That little trip to home will be a pleasure to solve. Thanks for your work.

1           FRAN LEVINGS  
2           76498 SQUIB CREEK DRIVE  
3           SANDSTONE, MINNESOTA 55072  
4           franlevings@gmail.com  
5           320-242-3933

6  
7   COMMENTS: I have been very supportive of  
8 this project right from the get-go, and my  
9 reasons are: Number 1, I strongly believe  
10 in mass transportation. I'm an avid  
11 environmentalist. I think we need to get  
12 more cars off the highways and get people to  
13 use this type of transportation, because it  
14 will reduce the level of pollutant gas  
15 emissions.

16           Secondly, I've always liked trains.  
17 I have always liked trains. I would use  
18 this train. I would go south. I would go  
19 north. Since I was born and raised in  
20 Superior, Wisconsin, I think it's exciting  
21 that Superior is one of the terminals. I  
22 know Superior very well. I know Duluth, and  
23 I would go up there; and then I would go  
24 south to Minneapolis, because I have many  
25 friends and relatives there; and the idea of

24-A-06-1

1 just riding a train, instead of driving a  
2 car, especially at my age is very wonderful.

3       Those are my thoughts.

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1                   DAVID BAKER  
2                   76498 SQUIB CREEK DRIVE  
3                   SANDSTONE, MINNESOTA 55072  
4                   franlevings@gmail.com  
5                   320-242-3933

6  
7    COMMENTS: I'm very excited about this  
8 project, and I think it's a wonderful idea,  
9 and I think there's a need, and I think it  
10 will grow in time in use.

25-A-06-1

11               Back in the day, I took the Amtrak  
12 to Chicago occasionally, and that's been  
13 going a long time. I think this will have a  
14 much higher ridership, and you can still  
15 make the same connections if you wanted.

16               That's about it, I guess. Yeah,  
17 just positive stuff. Looking forward to it.  
18 Hope it happens.

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1 PAULA SILTBERG  
2 781 MCCUSKEY DRIVE  
3 HOLYOKE, MINNESOTA 55749  
4 HOLYOKE TOWN BOARD

5  
6 COMMENTS: I can see benefits and uses for  
7 the train for the tourists up in Duluth, in  
8 Hinckley. I think we definitely need to  
9 look at additional ways to travel,  
10 especially with all of our roads, you know,  
11 to decrease the congestion on 35.

26-A-06-1

12 I would personally like to see  
13 that, if they have a maintenance building,  
14 that maybe they would do it in Sandstone,  
15 because I think it might create a little bit  
16 of job economy.

26-B-02-3

17 I'm not as familiar with, you know,  
18 all the safety rules. I have seen that they  
19 are definitely looking out for crossing  
20 safety, and I think that's going to be very  
21 beneficial, but, I don't know static-wise  
22 how safe trains are or aren't. I think it  
23 would probably be safer than driving, so I  
24 still think it's a benefit.

25 I can't think of anything else.

1 You know, there's probably a ton of things  
2 I'll think of when I leave, but I just think  
3 it would be a positive thing.

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1 JUDY DUNCAN  
2 792 HARLIS ROAD  
3 HOLYOKE, MINNESOTA 55749  
4 HOLYOKE TOWN BOARD SUPERVISOR

5  
6 COMMENTS: I think the presentation they  
7 have here is very good. Everything is out  
8 in the open, so you can understand it.

9 I feel that it's very, very  
10 expensive, and I don't know how many people  
11 it will actually benefit for it to be  
12 worthwhile.

13 I can see traveling a train would  
14 be safer than going down the hallway in a  
15 car, and it's a little hard to say how  
16 beneficial it will be since it's not here  
17 yet and functioning, but hopefully it will  
18 serve a good purpose. That's it.

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27-A-06-2

1 BRANDON JENNY

2 55810

3

4 COMMENTS: I think passenger service to the

5 Northland would be beneficial for the next

6 generation.

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9 (At 7:30, the proceedings

10 concluded.)

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28-A-06-1

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BRENT KRIST  
MILACA, MINNESOTA 56353  
BNSF RAILWAY

COMMENTS: Well, I just think that the train project, the NLX, will be a good tool for The Cities to bridge the travel gap and lighten congestion on the roads.

That the 200 BNSF employees in this district are well-trained and ready to handle just about any situation that may occur with passengers on the train.

That's it. Thank you.

29-A-06-1

1 JOHN HAGGERTY  
2 OTSEGO, MINNESOTA 55330  
3 BNSF RAILWAY

4  
5 COMMENTS: Just that I am looking forward to  
6 being able to travel to the Duluth/Superior  
7 area; that there's another option, I guess,  
8 rather than just driving; being able to take  
9 the train, would be, I think, very  
10 convenient for a lot of people; and because  
11 the North Shore is a destination for a lot  
12 of people, that it would hopefully be a  
13 well-used travel option.

14 That would it.

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17 (At 7:30, the proceedings  
18 concluded.)

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30-A-06-1

1 HARLEY HANSON  
2 DULUTH, MINNESOTA

3  
4 COMMENTS: My name is Harley Hanson, I live in Duluth,  
5 and I'm intrigued by the possibility of rail service from  
6 the Twin Cities to Duluth. And one of the reasons why I  
7 find, as I age, that it's much more attractive is I'd like  
8 to see more alternatives for folks who have difficulty  
9 traveling.

10 And I think of a family member who prematurely  
11 lost sight and we're able to spend time with her and she's  
12 able to be independent through an array of transportation  
13 options, and one of those options that may allow us to  
14 spend more time together in Duluth could possibly be the  
15 Northern Lights Express. Thank you.

31-A-06-1

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PAUL QUALY  
MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA 55408  
UNITED TRANSPORTATION UNION

COMMENTS: Hello, my name is Phillip, with two L's, Qualy,  
Q U A L Y, I live at 3021 Emerson Avenue South,  
Minneapolis, Minnesota, 55408, and for our -- I'm also a  
railroad conductor. I work as a railroad conductor with 36

1 years with Union Pacific Railway, and I also serve as state  
2 legislative director for the United Transportation Union  
3 and SMART-TD, representing 1,200 railroad workers in  
4 Minnesota.

5 Railroad workers strongly support the  
6 construction and operation of the NLX service between the  
7 Twin Cities and Duluth. We believe this and we know,  
8 operating on this segment of track for over 100 years, the  
9 service can be done safely and efficiently.

32-A-06-1

10 For the railroad workers, we're concerned for the  
11 future of Minnesota and our economic strength in this  
12 state. When we talk about potential costs, building the  
13 line, operating the line and so on, we think it's essential  
14 that the citizens of Minnesota take a look at the economic  
15 investment and the return and the revenue, tax revenue that  
16 could be generated by economic growth.

17 As we look at NLX today, first, as the men and  
18 women who actually operate on the Hinckley subdivision of  
19 the BNSF, the division is in good shape and the  
20 improvements that MnDOT proposes are correct.

21 From our experience operating the line, MnDOT has  
22 correctly, and their consultants have correctly assessed  
23 where developments can be made and the improvements that  
24 are going to be necessary.

32-B-02-4

25 For the railroad workers, while we are, of

1 course, interested in the jobs and the work it presents us,  
2 it's not our primary concern, the 15 or 20 conductors that  
3 might operate on this line, or train crew members, quite  
4 frankly, the price of a bushel of corn or soy beans is much  
5 more of a driving factor of our employment levels, in terms  
6 of workers and the amount of workers we have. This for the  
7 railroad workers is really about making sure Minnesota is  
8 competitive on the national railroad map.

9 One feature of the NLX study to date in MnDot's  
10 work is that they -- we have not even begun to look at the  
11 marketing opportunities and the segments of the population  
12 that will be served.

13 For example, there's a lot of people who commute  
14 between the Twin Cities and Duluth-Twin Ports on business  
15 weekly and daily, there are universities and colleges that  
16 are opportunities for ridership, as well as resorts and  
17 camp that could market their shuttles from the rail  
18 service terminals to the northern Minnesota, northern  
19 Wisconsin region. These have not been looked at yet, but  
20 are great opportunities for economic growth that our states  
21 and our towns and our main street economies need.

22 Looking at the national rail map, it's remarkable  
23 the amount of growth in passenger and transit rail and,  
24 again, we're concerned that Minnesota stay competitive on  
25 the national and world rail map. For example, Dallas-Fort

32-C-04-17

1 Worth, Oklahoma City, Salt Lake City, Denver, are all  
2 building out their transit systems.

3 Heavy rail, passenger rail level, Illinois,  
4 Michigan and the upper midwest are building out their rail  
5 systems and have had good success.

6 The world is changing, much to my own personal  
7 surprise, where millennials, young Americans are not buying  
8 cars and need passenger rail to connect and help businesses  
9 stay competitive. Senior citizens are now becoming more  
10 dependent on transit and passenger rail.

11 Minnesota right now has one Amtrak train per day  
12 between Chicago and Seattle. Minnesota is on Amtrak's  
13 state corridor designation of St. Cloud, Duluth, Twin  
14 Cities, LaCrosse and Chicago.

15 I'm very concerned that if Minnesota does not  
16 build out our passenger rail system, our 150 to 400-mile  
17 transportation system to provide rail, our Fortune 500  
18 companies could start leaving this state in ten to 15  
19 years. They simply won't be able to attract the world  
20 business people and talent that the new economy is  
21 expecting to be provided so businesses can grow. And, of  
22 course, when businesses grow, tax revenues are generated,  
23 tax revenues are collected by the states and that helps  
24 keep all taxpayers' tax rates lower because of a strong  
25 economy. This clearly is an important investment for not

32-D-04-17

1 only Duluth, but northern Minnesota and northern Wisconsin.  
2 Briefly, we'd just like to set forth a couple of  
3 facts: Amtrak, which operates service across the United  
4 States, last year returned 94 percent of our operating cost  
5 from our own revenues. 84 percent of that revenue was from  
6 ticket fare.

7 Railroad workers challenge any other mode of  
8 transportation; air, maritime or freeway/highway, to match  
9 the efficiencies Amtrak has gained and what we're gaining  
10 at the fare box to operate our systems.

11 Minnesota's empire builder ridership went up 5.8  
12 percent last year between six Minnesota stations, boarding  
13 and alighting. Amtrak, as a business, spent nearly \$60  
14 million buying services from Minnesota companies.

15 Again, we believe that building out our passenger  
16 rail corridors as part of the Oberstar vision for tying and  
17 assuring Minnesota stays competitive, service from Chicago,  
18 LaCrosse, Winona, Red Wing, St. Paul, Minneapolis,  
19 St. Cloud; St. Paul, Minneapolis, Duluth and other lines is  
20 just essential, as major as state corridor service.

21 Finally, as railroad workers we know that we must  
22 always be thinking about our national security, and as we  
23 run the freight and passenger railroads in this country, we  
24 always have to be prepared to run a silent railroad that  
25 cannot be interfered with by outside source or hostile

1 influence, but also we must be prepared that in an event of  
2 a national emergency, price of fuel should spike, perhaps  
3 we see fuel, gasoline at \$5 or \$6 per gallon, we have to  
4 have our passenger rail systems in place to keep our  
5 economies moving and also, quite frankly, to assure our  
6 national defense.

7           So, again, with a project with 155 miles between  
8 final terminals, the service to the economies, the  
9 potential for commuter service for nearby counties,  
10 railroad workers support this investment and we want to see  
11 Minnesota continue to grow and passenger rail and NLX is an  
12 important piece of this. Thank you very much.

13                                   - - - - -

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15                   (At 7:30 the proceedings concluded.)

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Jean Wiseheart  
701 W. Superior St; Apt 902  
Duluth, MN 55082  
[jlwheart@yahoo.com](mailto:jlwheart@yahoo.com)  
218-310-6642

33-A-02-6 Growing up in TC, I rode the train in 1960's-80's to visit family in Duluth and Isanti. In 1998, I moved to Duluth and missed having a train to take me to TC. My family and friends in TC want a train to get to Duluth. As a disabled elder, I want to be able to ride my scooter to TC. I also want the option of the train taking my car. Transporting passenger's vehicles needs to be included in the NLX plans. Besides offering commutes, NLX needs to be a destination. I took Amtrak in 1993 from Chicago to Oakland, a national Rail museum in Sacramento can board in Reno and gave us a talk on the railroad's history. Our coach was packed as we learned about the railroad.

33-B-03-1 NLX car offer dining experiences like tram dining in Europe. See attached Duluth News Tribune article of Dec. 30, 2015. NLC can be a student's experience by coordinating with St. Louis River Quest – see [www.duluthnewstribune.com](http://www.duluthnewstribune.com) article from May 15, 2017. The trips to/from Duluth can include volunteers and staff lectures and learning opportunities. Also, NLX needs to stress their connecting with Amtrak and providing more options for travelers. In Duluth, we have Bentleyville Nov-Dec. and we get people from all states visiting. We have the Tall Ships event and get visitors from all states and Canada. NLX can increase ridership with a national program.

Communication #37

**From:** Western Lakes Station [mailto:westernlakesstation@gmail.com]

**Sent:** Wednesday, May 24, 2017 4:03 PM

**To:** MN\_DOT\_NLX <NLX.DOT@state.mn.us>

**Subject:** Public Comment NLX Line

Patrick Schifferdecker  
Pine County Citizen  
10929 Black Spruce Road  
Pine City, MN 55063  
[westernlakesstation@gmail.com](mailto:westernlakesstation@gmail.com)  
[320.629.3979](tel:320.629.3979)

Sandstone May 16

37-A-06-1

I think it is a great idea and it has been too long in coming! We need safe and efficient alternatives to the automobile. I grew up in farm country in northern Illinois about 65 miles outside of Chicago and during my high school years my friends and I frequently caught the train into the city to visit museums, take in a Cubs game without the hassle of driving and parking. I naively assumed this was true of all our great cities.

While we are captives of the car-cult my wife and I use train service where ever it is available, having traveled on most of the Amtrack lines. We look forward to the opportunity to ride these rails.

So bring back the trains!

Sincerely,  
Patrick Schifferdecker

**From:** Helen Nestrud [mailto:ronhelennestrud@gmail.com] **Sent:** Wednesday, May 24, 2017 10:41 AM  
**To:** MN\_DOT\_NLX <NLX.DOT@state.mn.us>  
**Subject:** NLX Tier 2 Comment

Dear NLX Planning Committee,

We would like to address our concerns for the commuter train from Minneapolis to Duluth. We feel this would be a waste of time and tax payers dollars. Most of the people from Braham area are working construction or in the service industry and because of this,their hours would not allow them to use this form of transportation.

It would not have any benefits to the town of Braham! Besides adding to the amount of trains coming through our town, blowing horns, causing vibrations from trains, throwing rocks by trains (even though was remedied by R.R. but after awhile occurs again) The speed of NLX are added safety concerns for traffic and pedestrians. This is especially true for Braham because the town is so close to the tracks.

Our biggest issue with the NLX trains is our home and business. Our residence is located at the 1st house north of the Sinclair Gas Station and we will be directly impacted by the NLX train. I am a Daycare Provider and the trains are already a disruption and a safety concern for the children in my care. The NLX train would only add more to my concern for safety. If there would ever be a derailment of one of these NLX trains, it would wipe out our home and area businesses near the tracks.

In closing, I hope you will reconsider what an impact this train would be to my Daycare, our family, our home and to the small town of Braham.

Ron and Helen Nestrud

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