



Passenger Rail Office
Mail Stop 470
395 John Ireland Boulevard
St. Paul, MN 55155-1899

March 6, 2018

TO: Whom it May Concern

SUBJECT: Negative Declaration Regarding the Need for an Environmental Impact Statement for the Northern Lights Express Passenger Rail Project from Minneapolis to Duluth, Minnesota

The proposed project includes constructing the necessary infrastructure for, and operation of, an approximately 152-mile long, higher speed intercity passenger rail service between Minneapolis and Duluth, Minnesota, a portion of which will travel through Douglas County in Wisconsin, and that will reach speeds up to 90 miles per hour. Stations are proposed in six communities: Minneapolis, Coon Rapids, Cambridge, Hinckley, and Duluth in Minnesota and Superior in Wisconsin. In addition, the proposed NLX Project would include one maintenance facility and one layover facility. These facilities may be on separate sites in Sandstone and Duluth, or co-located on one site in Duluth.

The proposed action was described and analyzed in the Tier 2 Project Level Environmental Assessment (EA). The Tier 2 EA was prepared to fulfill the environmental review process requirements of Minnesota Statutes (Minn. Stat.) 116D and serves as an Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) under Minnesota state law. MnDOT is the Responsible Governmental Unit (RGU) at the state level. The Tier 2 EA was filed with the Minnesota Environmental Quality Board (EQB) and circulated with the required distribution list for review and comment. A Notice of Availability for the Tier 2 EA was published in the EQB Monitor on April 24, 2017 and available for public review and comment until May 24, 2017. During the 30-day public review period, MnDOT held three public meetings on May 16, 17, and 18, 2017 from 5:30 to 7:30 PM in Sandstone, Duluth and Coon Rapids, MN, respectively.

As the RGU for the proposed NLX Project, MnDOT thoroughly analyzed the project and its impacts. Through its analysis, coordination with affected agencies, public and community involvement, and comment letters received, MnDOT has determined that the proposed project as described in the Tier 2 EA does not have the potential for significant impact. MnDOT has concluded that an Environmental Impact Statement is not required and has issued a Negative Declaration for the project. This decision and determination is supported by the full administrative record of the project, including the Findings of Fact and Conclusions. The Negative Declaration concludes the Minnesota state environmental review process.

The Federal Railroad Administration issued a Finding of No Significant Impact for this project on February 20, 2018, which is consistent with this determination. The FONSI and the Findings of Fact and Conclusions document are available on the MnDOT website: www.mndot.gov/nlx/documents.html.

MnDOT does not intend to circulate paper copies of the FONSI or the Findings of Fact and Conclusions document. To request the documents in an alternative format, please contact the MnDOT Affirmative Action Office at 651-366-4718 or 1-800-657-3774 (Greater Minnesota); 711 or 1-800-627-3529 (Minnesota Relay). You may also send an email to ADArequest.dot@state.mn.us (Please request at least one week in advance).

For the Minnesota Department of Transportation:



03/06/2018

Francis Loetterle, Project Manager
Minnesota Department of Transportation

Date