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The Honorable Sean Duffy
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave SE
Washington, DC 20590

April 17, 2025

Dear Secretary Duffy:

We write to express our concern regarding the freezing of a FY25 RAISE grant awarded to the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) for the Robert Street Complete Streets and Viaduct Replacement project. The project was awarded \$25 million to be combined with local matching funds to reconstruct 1.5 miles of State Highway 3, or Robert Street. We ask that the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) work swiftly to unfreeze this grant and work with MnDOT to reach a signed grant agreement.

This \$25 million grant will be used to fix the deteriorating pavement on Robert Street, some of which is over 100 years old. The funding will also be used to reconstruct the George Street bridge over Robert Street and the adjacent retaining walls along Robert Street, known collectively as the viaduct. The Robert Street viaduct was constructed in 1930 and outlived its 50-year life span in 1980. The viaduct is crumbling and, due to its age and the cost and frequency of repairs, it is now more cost effective to replace the viaduct than to continue repairs. While there is not a process for rating the retaining walls, the George Street bridge has an overall bridge sufficiency rating of 74 and a National Bridge Inventory (NBI) condition rating of 5. This \$25 million grant is essential to making these necessary improvements and upgrades.

Completing this project is a life, health, and safety issue for the community. Robert Street is a critical transportation artery connecting downtown Saint Paul to the West Side community of Saint Paul by crossing the Mississippi River. Robert Street is used by ambulances to access several hospitals in downtown Saint Paul and is a route for school buses taking children to and from school. With numerous senior living facilities in West St. Paul, Robert Street serves as an essential connector for our seniors to medical appointments and other essential services as well as access shopping, entertainment, and more. Additionally, the north and south points of the viaduct have limited visibility for drivers and pedestrians which contributes to the Robert Street corridor's designation as a "high injury corridor." If this grant remains frozen or is canceled, the U.S. Department of Transportation will be directly impacting the lives, health, and safety of children, seniors, and other residents in Saint Paul's West Side neighborhood.

While the RAISE grant program been renamed as the Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) grant, this project continues to fit within the parameters of the grant program. This project will have significant impact on Saint Paul's West Side neighborhood, as well as the entire East Metro region. Reconstructing Robert Street will enable opportunities for local partnerships to develop the Robert Street roadway as a future arterial bus rapid transit route (Metro Transit G Line) and to replace aging sanitary and water systems dating from the late 1800s. Additionally, this \$25 million grant will help revitalize the West Side neighborhood which is home to many homes, businesses, and restaurants. Ensuring that Robert Street is a safe corridor will promote economic development and support existing businesses along this corridor.

We ask that the U.S. Department of Transportation work to unfreeze the \$25 million grant and execute the grant agreement for the Robert Street Complete Streets and Viaduct Replacement project. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out our staff via email: Erin.Melody@mail.house.gov and Andrea.Cruz.Bracamontes@house.mn.gov. We look forward to your prompt response and attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Betty McCollum
Member of Congress



María Isa Pérez-Vega
Minnesota State Representative

CC: The Honorable Nancy Daubenberger, Commissioner, Minnesota Department of Transportation