



Duluth-Superior Metropolitan Interstate Council

Guiding the Future of Transportation for the Twin Ports Area

November 9th, 2023

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
Secretary of Transportation
United States Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE
Washington, DC 20590

Subject:

Letter of Support – Bike and Pedestrian Accommodation - Blatnik Bridge
Reconstruction Project - 2023 MPDG and BIP Grant Request

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

On behalf of the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC), an advisory committee to the Duluth-Superior Metropolitan Interstate Council (MIC), I am pleased to submit this letter of support for the joint Minnesota and Wisconsin Departments of Transportation application for a grant to help fund the Blatnik Bridge Reconstruction Project under the Multimodal Project Discretionary Grant Program (MPDG) and the Bridge Investment Program (BIP).

The MIC is the federally designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Twin Ports of Duluth, MN and Superior, WI, and has identified this crossing replacement as a priority improvement project in its Long Range Transportation Plan, *Sustainable Choices 2045*. In addition, this crossing is identified as a key missing link for active transportation and micromobility in both the MIC's Duluth-Superior Bikeways Plan and Duluth-Superior Pedestrian Plan. It is strongly supported by the BPAC as a facility that will accommodate safe, comfortable, convenient, and reliable year-round transportation for all modes, and will also serve the economic, social, and environmental progress of our region.

As the Twin Ports is a regional hub for employment and social services, this crossing replacement project will maintain a key transportation link between northeast Minnesota and northwest Wisconsin while improving it for all modes of transportation. Although there are other crossings over the St. Louis River Estuary, the crossing at the Blatnik Bridge has historically been the most direct transportation link between the two cities, and as such, must serve current transportation needs and support innovative future uses.

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In summary, replacing this crossing is a top priority for the greater Twin Ports region. These improvements will not only encourage regional growth but will also expand the transportation options for a multimodal network that serves hundreds of communities across northern Minnesota, Wisconsin, and beyond.

Sincerely,



Ron Chicka, AICP

MIC Director

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cc: Wayne Boucher, MN MIC Policy Board Co-Chair
Nick Baker, WI MIC Policy Board Co-Chair
Andrea Crouse, BPAC Chair



