



June 15, 2020

The Honorable Ronald L. Batory
Administrator of the Federal Railroad Administration
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Administrator Batory,

This letter is in support of the Wisconsin Department of Transportation and Minnesota Department of Transportation joint application to the Federal Railroad Administration's Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) program for funds to support the capital improvements for the Twin Cities-Milwaukee-Chicago Intercity Passenger Rail (TCMC) Project.

As the advocate of business, the Eau Claire Area Chamber of Commerce champions a strong local and regional economy. Our membership includes 1,200 organizations who employ over 40,000 individuals. We advocate for policies that promote a good business environment and support efficient and effective government.

Transportation is a critical component for economic prosperity. The Chamber has long advocated for establishing passenger rail service to our region as an important component for economic competitiveness and talent attraction. We understand that the Wisconsin Department of Transportation will consider including a shuttle connection from the Chippewa Valley to the Amtrak station at Tomah as part of the planned implementation of the TCMC. We believe an Amtrak shuttle from Eau Claire to Tomah would enhance the connectivity of our community by opening up more travel opportunities for area residents, students, and visitors to connect to/from Milwaukee and Chicago via Tomah.

Therefore, we support the TCMC Project because it fills regional transportation system gaps across and beyond the current Amtrak route, including nearby cities like ours. It provides an alternative that is cost-effective to implement, operate and maintain, responds to increases in population and economic growth, integrates with Hiawatha service, and avoids travel time delays sometimes experienced by the eastbound Empire Builder as it travels from the West Coast.

We understand the Federal funding would be utilized to implement critical infrastructure improvements throughout the TCMC Corridor, allow for TCMC operations to commence, improve existing freight operations, and provide economic value along the entire corridor. Federal funding would greatly reduce the barriers to successful implementation of the TCMC Project and we support the application for the CRISI Grant Program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David W. Minor".

David W. Minor
President & CEO