



Minnesota Department of Transportation

Passenger Rail Office

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**September 3, 2013**

**To Whom It May Concern:**

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

The proposed project includes the construction of the necessary infrastructure for the operation of an approximately 155-mile long, high-speed intercity passenger rail service between Minneapolis and Duluth, Minnesota, known as the Northern Lights Express service, a portion of which would travel through Douglas County in Wisconsin and potentially reach speeds of 110 miles per hour. Under Minnesota rules, the Minnesota Department of Transportation is the responsible governmental unit for the proposed project.

The proposed action was described and analyzed in a Tier 1 service level Environmental Assessment, circulated to the Environmental Assessment Worksheet Distribution List and others. A notice of availability appeared in the Minnesota EQB Monitor on March 18, 2013. The comment period closed on April 17, 2013.

As the RGU for the proposed NLX project, MnDOT has thoroughly analyzed the project and its impacts. Through its own 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 1 service level 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 Order 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 (defined at the Tier 1 Level) on August 21, 2013, which is consistent with this determination. The FONSI is available on the Federal Railroad Administration website at: <http://www.fra.dot.gov/Page/P0624>.

MnDOT does not intend to circulate paper copies of the FONSI, Findings of Fact and Conclusions document or the Negative Declaration Order. The Findings of Fact and Conclusions document is available on the project website at: [www.mndot.gov/nlx](http://www.mndot.gov/nlx). To request the document 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 e-mail to [ADArequest.dot.state.mn.us](mailto:ADArequest.dot.state.mn.us) (Please request at least one week in advance).

For the Minnesota Department of Transportation:

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Julie Carr

Date

Project Manager

Minnesota Department of Transportation

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