



MINNESOTA PUBLIC TRANSIT ASSOCIATION

April 23, 2020

Governor Tim Walz
130 State Capitol
St. Paul, MN 55155

Speaker Melissa Hortman
463 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Lt. Governor Peggy Flanagan
130 State Capitol
St. Paul, MN 55155

Senate Majority Leader Paul Gazelka
3113 Senate Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Senate Minority Leader Susan Kent
2227 Senate Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

House Minority Leader Kurt Daudt
267 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Senator Scott Newman
Chair, Senate Transportation
3105 Senate Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Representative Frank Hornstein
Chair, House Transportation
545 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Governor Walz and Legislative Leaders:

Thank you for your work with the Mayo Clinic and the University of Minnesota to develop the capacity for much more testing for both COVID-19 infection and antibodies to the disease. On behalf of the transit system members of the Minnesota Public Transit Association all across the state, I urge you make the testing of transit workers a priority.

Transit systems are facing tough decisions daily. Do they pick up people from the nearby Jennie-O plant where workers have tested positive for COVID-19? How do they provide a ride to someone who appears sick but needs to get to their usual medical appointment? How else can people get around in rural areas if the transit system doesn't have drivers who are well enough or willing to take the risk of transporting passengers? Many areas don't have local taxi service. Where can transit systems find masks and gloves and hand sanitizer? How can they protect drivers and passengers in wheelchairs needing securement since that requires close contact?

More and more transit systems are deciding to try to find plexiglass or even shower curtains to separate drivers from passengers but there are big inconsistencies. As the number of cases in Minnesota continues to increase, transit systems need assistance in order to provide rides that people need as well as providing food delivery for people in their communities. Testing will be key to keeping these valuable systems running.

Concern is being raised around the country about the need for more testing and more PPE for transit workers. This week, a [letter](#) was sent to Vice President Pence, Dr. Birx and Dr. Fauci from transit systems and unions all across the country relating stories of transit workers who have died from COVID-19 and requesting a more coordinated federal response to providing PPE. As noted in the letter, protective gear for transit workers will increase the availability of the transit workforce, leading to greater provision of transit service, less crowding on transit vehicles, and lower rates of transmission among transit riders and the general population.

The number of deaths of transit workers in New York City alone has reached 83. We need to act now to prevent sickness and death among transit workers in Minnesota. We believe that the availability of testing for transit system workers will reduce transmission and allow us to keep providing the service that so many people still rely on, especially in more rural areas where there are few alternatives.

Thank you for your consideration and any assistance you can provide.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Craig Rempp", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Craig Rempp
President

cc: Victoria Nill, Director, Office of Transit and Active Transportation
Suzanne Sobotka, Policy Analyst