

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

December 15, 2023

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

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,


We write to reiterate our strong support of the Minnesota and Wisconsin Departments of Transportation's application for federal funding through the *Bipartisan Infrastructure Law*. This federal funding will improve the condition of major bridges across the country. By replacing the Blatnik Bridge, the project would exemplify the type of critical infrastructure project that was envisioned by Congress.

As noted in our letter to President Biden in September 2023, the Blatnik Bridge, located over St. Louis Bay on Lake Superior, is one of two bridges that connects the cities of Duluth, Minnesota with Superior, Wisconsin. The Bridge carries Interstate Highway 535 and over 33,000 vehicles per day. It is an essential economic engine in the region and a key link in the global supply chain. Each year, 265,000 trucks transporting nearly \$4 billion in goods pass over the bridge. Many businesses and industries in the region also rely on the bridge to reach the Port of Duluth-Superior, the largest U.S. port on the Great Lakes and North America's farthest-inland freshwater seaport.

However, the bridge is over sixty years old and has reached the end of its useful service life. It is in poor condition with significant structural deterioration, creating serious capacity, mobility, and safety concerns. Funding from the *Bipartisan Infrastructure Law* would be used to replace the Blatnik Bridge. Specifically, the project would replace all structural elements of the bridge, address safety concerns at bridge interchanges, and restore the bridge to its original operational condition. These improvements to the bridge would significantly enhance the safety, efficiency, and reliability of this key regional connection. Completing this project would support the needs of Minnesotans and Wisconsinites by improving and modernizing the regional transportation network in northeast Minnesota and northwest Wisconsin.

Thank you again for your attention to the Minnesota and Wisconsin Departments of Transportation's application for funding.

Sincerely,



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator



Tina Smith
United States Senator



Pete Stauber
Member of Congress

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1. Nelson, Shelley. (2023, August 21). *Wisconsin, Minnesota seek federal funding for Blatnik Bridge*. Superior Telegram. Retrieved from <https://www.superiortelegram.com/news/local/wisconsin-minnesota-seek-federal-funding-for-blatnik-bridge>
 2. Huston, Patrick and Gastoni, Vince. (2023, May 16). *Blatnik Bridge Replacement Project Update*. Minnesota Department of Transportation. Retrieved from https://edocs-public.dot.state.mn.us/edocs_public/DMResultSet/download?docId=32849471
 3. Ibid.