



February 3, 2025

The Honorable Secretary
United States Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave. S.E.
Washington, D.C. 20590

Re: Letter of Support for MnDOT's Highway 13 Slope Stability Planning Project Funding Pursuit

To Whom it May Concern:

I am writing to express my support of the Minnesota Department of Transportation's (MnDOT) application for funding through the FY 2024-2025 Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient, and Cost-Saving Transportation (PROTECT) Discretionary Grant Program. The West St. Paul-Mendota Heights Eagan Area Schools (District 197) recognizes the need for enhanced safety and resilience to climate related impacts along Highway 13 as an important connector for students, community members, and staff.

In alignment with the vision and goals of the PROTECT Program, the Highway 13 Slope Stability Planning Project will study ongoing issues and develop solutions that improve the resilience of Highway 13 in Mendota Heights, MN. Located along the steep terrain of the Mississippi River in the heart of Minneapolis–Saint Paul metropolitan region, Highway 13 experiences critical slope failures due to natural hazards and climate stressors such as extreme precipitation. Slope failures caused Highway 13 to close three times since 2015.

Minnesota's climate, geology, and terrain along the river increase the incidence of slope failures due to saturation of the soil along slopes and beneath the roadway. As a result, roadways and bridges have to be entirely closed until expensive emergency repairs and short-term stabilization efforts are complete. Slope failures in the project corridor have further damaged the nearby regional trail and impacted the Union Pacific freight rail line. Such lengthy closures impact the movement of people and freight along the first ring of suburbs south of St. Paul and lead to traffic diversion onto other already congested arterial highways.

MnDOT is well positioned to make efficient and impactful use of federal funding through the PROTECT Program. Given the increasing severity of extreme weather events due to climate change, proactive measures like the Highway 13 Slope Stability Planning Project are crucial to ensuring the resilience of our transportation infrastructure. This project will leverage MnDOT's slope stability research to propose a comprehensive and strategic approach to reducing these risks. The study results will provide a detailed plan for MnDOT to improve the resiliency of Highway 13. The study results will be incorporated into the scoping of a pavement project MnDOT has planned for the corridor in 2032.

In light of the urgent need to address these slope vulnerabilities and the demonstrated capacity of MnDOT to deliver high-quality infrastructure projects, we wholeheartedly support this application for funding through the FY 2024-2025 PROTECT Discretionary Grant Program. Thank you for your consideration and the opportunity for me to voice my support for this important project.

Sincerely,

Peter Olson-Skog, Superintendent
ISD 197 (West St. Paul/Mendota Heights/Eagan Area Schools)