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March 15, 2022

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

RE: Letter of Support for the 2022 RAISE Discretionary Grant: US Highway 169/County Road (CR 4) Rural Safety and Mobility Interchange Project

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

We are writing this letter to express our support for the Sherburne County request for a 2022 DOT RAISE Discretionary Grant to improve the safe and efficient operations of the US Highway 169/County Road (CR 4) Interchange.

The Project will replace the last remaining at-grade signalized intersection for a 75-mile section of US 169. The interchange includes a tight ramp configuration west of US 169 and a loop in the southeast quadrant of the interchange. The proposed design minimizes wetland resources and right-of-way impacts to lands adjacent to US 169 and constructs a safe multimodal pedestrian and bicycle trail facility connection on the proposed CR 4 bridge crossing over US 169. The Project will consolidate and improve local roadway access and private access points on US 169 with a hybrid diamond interchange at CR 4. We are excited that the project has been allocated \$2.0M in State Bond funds for the design of the interchange. We are even more excited to see the design work is well underway.

US Highway 169 is vital for our community as it is the most direct connection to the Twin Cities metropolitan area. This is of great importance for the large number of residents and business that reside in Mille Lacs County and work in the Twin Cities, and also for those businesses in Mille Lacs County that rely heavily on tourism from the Twin Cities. Per the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED), in 2019 56.8% of individuals employed in Mille Lacs County commuted into the County for work, but lived outside its borders. Additionally, 64.1% of individuals living in Mille Lacs County were employed outside the County. US Highway 169 is critical to these commuters and ensuring that both local businesses have access to the skilled workforce they require, and that residents have access to economic and social opportunities via Highway 169.

Please give this 2022 RAISE Discretionary Grant proposal your full consideration and if I can answer anything further, please let me know.

Sincerely,

Genny Reynolds
Mille Lacs County Board Chairperson