Minnesota Department of Transportation

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March 24, 2006

To Whom It May Concern:

SUBJECT: Negative Declaration Regarding the Need for an Environmental Impact Statement for Northstar Corridor Rail Project from Minneapolis to Big Lake, in Hennepin, Anoka and Sherburne Counties, Minnesota

In December, 2005, the Minnesota Department of Transportation (Mn/DOT), the Northstar Corridor Development Authority, and the Metropolitan Council of the Twin Cities approved and circulated an Environmental Assessment /Draft Section 4(f) Evaluation for the above referenced project. Under the Minnesota state environmental process the Minnesota Department of Transportation is the Responsible Governmental Unit for such actions. The purpose of that Environmental Assessment was to describe and analyze the changes in the Northstar project since the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statements, dated October, 2000 and March 2002 respectively, and the Record of Decision dated December 2002. That analysis was conducted to provide the basis to determine if there were any potential for significant environmental impacts resulting from the revised project which were not analyzed in the environmental impact statements. The analysis was performed to reach an informed and appropriate decision whether to issue a Negative Declaration for the revised project, or that a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement was warranted.

Mn/DOT has undertaken a thorough analysis of the project and its impacts. Through this analysis, coordination with affected agencies, public involvement, and comment letters received, Mn/DOT has determined that the project revisions do not have the potential for significant environmental impacts. Mn/DOT has concluded that a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement is not required, and determined that a Negative Declaration will be ordered. The record of this decision and determination is supported by the attached Findings of Fact and Conclusions/Final Section 4(f). This Negative Declaration concludes the Minnesota State Environmental Review Process. The project can proceed to permitting, contract letting, and construction. As an item of information, the Federal Transit Administration issued a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) on this project on March 15, 2006, which is consistent with this determination (attached).

For the Minnesota Department of Transportation

Frank W. Pafko — 3/24/06

Frank W. Pafko
Chief Environmental Officer
Director, Office of Environmental Services

Date

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