



# Duluth-Superior Metropolitan Interstate Council

Guiding the Future of Transportation for the Twin Ports Area

June 23, 2025

Nicole Westadt  
Office of Transportation System Management  
Minnesota Department of Transportation  
395 John Ireland Boulevard  
St. Paul, MN 55155

## **Subject: Letter of Support for Corridors of Commerce Readiness Advancement – I-35 Thompson Hill Reconstruction with Truck Climbing Lane Extension**

Dear Ms. Westadt,

On behalf of the Duluth-Superior Metropolitan Interstate Council (MIC) Policy Board, we are writing to express our strong support for the I-35 Thompson Hill Reconstruction with Truck Climbing Lane Extension application for funding through the Corridors of Commerce Readiness Advancement solicitation.

A recent MIC study of the I-35 corridor in the Duluth-Superior area identified several infrastructure and safety improvements, including an extension of the truck climbing lane that would restore I-35 to good condition, modernize freight accommodations, and strengthen long-term operations and safety. The Thompson Hill area serves as a major freight corridor, providing access to and from northern Minnesota for the movement of goods and services that many industries, employers, health care patients, students, shoppers, commuters and tourists depend upon. Due to the steep grade of Thompson Hill, freight stakeholders have shared that freight trucks have difficulty traveling through the area without a full-length truck climbing lane. Additionally, the curve along I-35 south of the Cody Street exit has one of the highest crash rates on Minnesota's interstate system. The combination of high crash rates, poor pavement conditions, and difficult freight travel all contribute to the critical need for improvements to the Thompson Hill area. As such, improving the I-35 Thompson Hill reconstruction project is a top priority.

The MIC considers this project consistent with the Corridors of Commerce program goals that emphasize the safety, efficiency, and reliability of the movement of people and freight. The I-35 Thompson Hill corridor provides a critical connection for residents, tourists, and freight movement. As such, this corridor acts as a hub for much of the economic activity in our country and provides access and support to our local industries including mining, logging, and tourism. Reconstruction of the I-35 Thompson Hill corridor including the extension of the truck climbing lane is a vital project that is necessary for the long-term success and economic prosperity of the Duluth-Superior metropolitan area and the surrounding region.

As the federally designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the greater Duluth, MN-Superior, WI area, the MIC is charged with transportation planning for all modes of travel. Our mission includes dedication to region-wide transportation planning and acting as a forum (with our member committees) for transportation issues in the urbanized area. The initiatives within this grant application support a key objective within the MPOs Metropolitan Transportation Plan; that of safe and efficient movement of people and goods within the Duluth-Superior metropolitan area.

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Thank you for your consideration and approval of this application for a grant to help fund the I-35 Thompson Hill Reconstruction with Truck Climbing Lane Extension under the Corridors of Commerce Program. The MIC looks forward to the collaborative work ahead. If you have any questions or need any further information, please let me know.

Sincerely,

  
**Ron Chicka**  
MIC Director

  
**Wayne Boucher**  
MN Board Co-Chair

  
**Nick Baker**  
WI Board Co-Chair

cc: Wayne Boucher, MN MIC Policy Board Co-Chair  
Nick Baker, WI MIC Policy Board Co-Chair

