

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

September 27, 2023

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We write in support of the Minnesota and Wisconsin Department of Transportations' application for funding to replace the Blatnik Bridge.

The Blatnik Bridge, which you visited last year, is a critical transportation link carrying I-535 over the St. Louis Bay to connect the cities of Duluth, Minnesota and Superior, Wisconsin. Over 33,000 vehicles cross the bridge per day, including commuters and visitors. The Blatnik Bridge is also 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 across the Upper Midwest 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. It is also one of the largest marine links for U.S. trade with Canada, the top trade partner of Minnesota, Wisconsin and the whole United States.

The Blatnik Bridge opened in 1961 and has reached the end of its useful service life. It is in poor condition and has significant structural deterioration. Bridge users experience lane closures and other disruptions multiple times each year due to inspections and maintenance work, and the bridge is currently ranked as the number one risk for service interruption in Minnesota. Since 2019, the bridge has been load posted for 40 tons and can no longer accommodate overweight loads, and could be at risk for complete closure by 2030.

Federal funding would be used to replace all structural elements of the bridge, add a shared use path for pedestrians, address safety concerns at bridge interchanges, and restore the bridge to its original operational condition; improving the safety, efficiency, and reliability of this key regional and global connection.

By funding needed updates to the Blatnik Bridge, we can make sure drivers have a safe way to cross the St. Louis Bay for years to come. Thank you for your attention to this issue.

Sincerely,



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



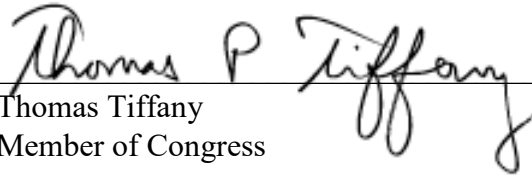
Pete Stauber
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Tina Smith
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Thomas Tiffany
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Betty McCollum
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Angie Craig
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