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UNITED STATES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

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SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENT
AND RELATED AGENCIES

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ON INTELLIGENCE

CO-CHAIR EMERITUS
CONGRESSIONAL NATIVE AMERICAN CAUCUS

February 28, 2025

Representative Jon Koznick, Chair
and Committee Members
House Transportation Finance and Policy Committee
2nd Floor Centennial Office Building
658 Cedar Street
Saint Paul, MN 55155

RE: **Consideration of HF494 (West, Koznick)**

Dear Chair Koznick and Members of the House Transportation Finance and Policy Committee:

I write in strong opposition to HF494 and urge members of the committee to reject the funding prohibition on ReConnect Rondo.

In the 1960s, the Rondo community was torn apart to make way for the new Interstate 94, displacing the inhabitants of Rondo and economically crippling the community. Over the last 15 years, elders and descendants of Rondo have led the work to create a bold, community-driven vision to repair the harm caused by I-94. Out of neighborhood-led discussions of the Rondo Roundtable, has come the proposed creation of a Rondo African American Cultural Enterprise District connected by a Community Land Bridge over I-94. The project will preserve the continual traffic flow on I-94 while adding new land to support housing, small businesses, and community spaces.

As the Representative of Minnesota's Fourth Congressional District and the Rondo community, I know first-hand that it is the community-led vision that drives this project forward. I strongly support this project as the Rondo community and ReConnect Rondo continue to serve as a national restorative model for creating more vibrant and connected communities. The *Bipartisan Infrastructure Law* (Pub. L. 117-58) established the first federal grant program to redress historic inequities caused by the creation of the federal highway system. ReConnect Rondo and the Community Land Bridge have received two grants totaling \$4 million to support planning activities as part of the project's eventual master plan. These grants represent the federal government taking responsibility for the lasting harm wrought on the Rondo community.

HF494 threatens to undo years of trust-building, community engagement, and equity-centered planning. Prohibiting funding for ReConnect Rondo sends the message that communities working with jurisdictional stakeholders and legislatures to right historical wrongs are not worthy of investment. In addition, I am concerned that the way HF494 was drafted—to prohibit the expenditure of federal money—will also prohibit ReConnect Rondo from accessing funds granted to them by President Biden through the Reconnecting Communities Program as the Minnesota Department of Transportation was a co-application on the grant.

I urge you to reject HF494 and stand with the Rondo community in their vision to reclaim, reconnect, and revitalize their neighborhood—building a stronger future not just for Rondo, but for the entire region.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Betty McCollum". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Betty McCollum
Member of Congress