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April 16, 2018

Ms. Cynthia T. Brown
Chief, Section of Administration
Surface Transportation Board
Office of Proceedings
395 E Street, S.W.
Washington, DC 20423-0001

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April 23, 2018
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**Re: Docket No. FD 36178, Metropolitan Council – Petition for Declaratory Order
Docket No. FD 36177, Hennepin County Regional Rail Authority – Acquisition Exemption –
In Hennepin County, Minnesota**

**LETTER IN SUPPORT OF TWIN CITIES & WESTERN RAILROAD COMPANY'S
INITIAL REPLY REQUESTING THE BOARD TO SET A PROCEDURAL SCHEDULE**

Dear Ms. Brown:

Renewable Products Marketing Group, LLC (RPMG) urges the Board to set a procedural schedule in the above referenced proceeding (FD 36178) to permit public comment and a full hearing on Metropolitan Council's Petition seeking to acquire ownership of the Bass Lake and Kenilworth corridors in Hennepin County, Minnesota. The Board should also stay Hennepin County Regional Rail Authority's ("HCRRA") request in FD 36177 to acquire the common carrier obligations for the line.

RPMG is located in Shakopee, MN, Scott County, MN. As a Minnesota based company established in 1996, RPMG has been marketing ethanol and co-products for over 20 years. We currently market: nearly 2 billion gallons of ethanol; in excess of 2.2 million tons of Dried Distillers Grains; and over 300 million pounds of Distillers Corn Oil on an annual basis. We provide essential marketing and supply services to our members and marketing partners. RPMG is a leader in renewable fuels, with an unwavering commitment to renewable energy as a whole. One of our member plants, Heartland Corn Products (HCP), Winthrop, MN is located on Twin Cities & Western Railroad Company ("TCW"). For over 20 years, we have relied on TCW for efficient and effective rail access to the Twin Cities to connect with major Class I carriers such as BNSF, CPRS and UP, a route that includes the Bass Lake/Kenilworth corridor. We ship over 4,700 carloads a year over this route. There is no other economically viable rail route for our products to move to and from the Twin Cities rail terminal.

Several years ago, TCW informed us that the Metropolitan Council was seeking to expand its light rail service from Minneapolis west to certain suburban communities. When it was determined that the Metropolitan Council had selected the Bass Lake/Kenilworth corridor for a joint light rail /freight rail corridor, TCW committed that it would work with the Council to reach agreements both that:



(1) minimized disruption to freight rail service during construction, and (2) to assure that the presence of light rail in the freight rail corridor would not negatively impact TC&W's operational and economic ability to provide service or force shippers, such as RPMG on behalf of Heartland Corn Products (HCP), to subsidize the expense of adding light rail to the corridor.

We understand the Metropolitan Council recently abruptly ended negotiations with TCW and has filed its present Petition asking the Board to approve an arrangement whereby the Council will acquire ownership of the rail line but will ask the Board to transfer the common carrier obligation to HCRRA. This is a very complicated transaction that needs full public input and understanding. Neither the Council nor HCRRA has ever sought our input on freight rail needs on the corridor and we now have learned they have no agreements in place with TCW on how freight service will be handled on this proposed "shared corridor" route.

We urge the Board to set a procedural schedule and delay HCRRA's request to acquire the common carrier obligation in order to solicit the views of others affected by this transaction – in particular shippers like ourselves who need this vital rail route to move our goods through the Twin Cities. Entrusting the common carrier obligation to a public entity that does not operate freight rail service provides little assurance that important shipper interests in continued effective transportation service will be protected. In addition, deciding on this matter without reaching an agreement with the one entity that is currently – and effectively – providing the common carrier service, TCW, is a matter of significant concern and warrants close scrutiny by the Board.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Douglas E. Punke", written in a cursive, flowing style.

Douglas E. Punke, CEO
Renewable Products Marketing Group, LLC

Cc: Parties of Record



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