



January 23, 2018

Commissioner Charles A. Zelle  
Minnesota Department of Transportation  
395 John Ireland Blvd  
St. Paul, MN  
55155-1800

Commissioner Zelle,

As state lawmakers representing the areas in or near the Goose Creek Rest Stop along Interstate 35 near Harris, we would like to share with you our concerns about the reconstruction of this facility, and the significant and excessive costs to the Minnesota taxpayers.

We have reviewed your documents dated April 25, 2016 that estimated it would cost between \$4 million and \$5 million to reconstruct the rest area. We have now learned that MnDOT accepted bids totaling \$7.19 million for the project—significantly over budget.

Our review of the design specifications revealed a list of questionable expenses including:

- Curved glass to accommodate the circular design of the building
- Ipe wood (harvested primarily from Brazilian rainforests)
- Ceiling made out of wood veneer instead of traditional, less expensive ceiling tile

All of these come at greater and unnecessary expense to the taxpayers. So with these costs in mind, we would appreciate a detailed reply addressing the following concerns:

- How was this bid process conducted? Was any consideration given to rebidding the project, considering the accepted offer was nearly \$3 million over budget?
- Did you attempt to negotiate with the construction company to lower the final price or alter the design specifications to utilize lower-cost alternatives? How does your agency justify the lavish features in what is effectively a roadside bathroom?
- What, if any, steps have been taken or will be taken to ensure future projects are completed at or below their budgeted cost?

We are not questioning the fact that work was needed at the Goose Creek Rest Stop, but it appears you have chosen to build an opulent, overpriced facility when all that is needed is a functional building with new bathroom facilities.

Given that this money is appropriated out of Trunk Highway funds, it's unconscionable that greater care was not taken to limit costs to ensure as much funding as possible remains focused on road and bridge infrastructure.

We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brian Johnson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

State Representative Brian Johnson

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Anne Neu". The signature is cursive and elegant.

State Representative Anne Neu

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jason Rarick". The signature is cursive and bold, with a large loop at the end.

State Representative Jason Rarick