

1) Question 1: Why does it still make sense to have a regional government?

a) Operational Reasons

Some regional government services are most efficiently provided at the regional level

- i) Wastewater treatment
- ii) Water service (in hindsight, we probably should have created a regional water system.)
- iii) Transit service

(1) Q: Does it still make sense to have opt outs?

- (a) History of Opt Outs (Regional Transit Sales Tax – only covers capital, now)
- (b) Pros: Innovation
- (c) Cons: Long Haul Express Services have been hammered by Telework
- (d) Cons: Regional Planning is made more complicated

b) Planning Reasons

- i) Federal Transportation Finance Laws require regional transportation plans created by regional Metropolitan Planning Organizations with the participation of local elected officials. (Which we satisfy by using the TAB to allocation federal funds.)
- ii) The interests of individual cities and counties are not always aligned with the Interest of the region as a whole.

(1) Regional Policy Successes include

- (a) We have been far more effective in making the land use – transportation planning connection. (As well as Portland, better than Denver, far better than any other peer region.)
- (b) We invented the Livable Communities program (Administered by the Met Council) to incentivize cities to promote the distribution of affordable housing fairly throughout the region (this program is being gamed)
- (c) We have invented institutions such as the fiscal disparities regional tax base sharing system to mitigate the otherwise inevitable competition for commercial industrial tax base.
- (d) We have used the TAB process to equitably distribute federal transportation funds to cities and counties around the region. (Analysis shows that, over time, the money follows the population.)

(2) Regional Policy Failures Include

- (a) We have allowed cities to use the municipal consent process to block regional transit projects (SW Light Rail)
- (b) We have allowed cities to engage in exclusionary zoning policies to block the development of affordable housing (a national problem)

Other regions envy our successful institutions

2) Question 2: If we should have a Regional Government, how should it be governed?

a) Why not a COG? The tensions lie in two dimensions:

i) Core counties vs collar counties

Historically, collar counties have supported COGS while core counties have been opposed.

(1) Most County-only COG proposals over the years have come from the collar counties and have proposed one county, one vote even though Hennepin County has 16 times the population of Carver County.

(2) By my math, proportionality would require something like:

(a) Hennepin County: 3 Votes

(b) Ramsey County 2: Votes

(c) Scott & Carver County: Share 1 vote

(d) Other Counties: 1 Vote, each

(3) CTIB was an experiment with a proportional county voting system and it was a dismal failure.

ii) Counties vs Cities

Some Counties have been in favor of COGs while most cities have been opposed.

(1) County Commissions jobs pay comparatively well and county commissioners devote most of their time to this role.

(2) Mayor and City Councilmember positions generally pay less than \$10K and these officeholders generally have full-time jobs. (As a city councilmember in Bloomington, I devoted about 10 hours of week to that role.)

(3) The view of the cities (as expressed by Metro Cities) is that a mixed COG with both County and City elected officials would be dominated by the County Commissioners who would have far more time to devote to Met Council work.

(4) Note: As a Met Council member I devoted about 20 hours per week to that role. During the two-year period when we were rewriting the major policy documents like the Regional Blueprint and Transportation Policy Plan, I used all my "day job" vacation time to participate in work sessions related to the writing of those documents and frequently had to do "day job" work on Saturdays.)

(5) Note: Counties and Cities are equally important stakeholders

(a) Counties play a relatively more important role in transportation planning, but

(b) Cities control all land use planning

(c) Affordable housing planning responsibilities are shared differently around the region

iii) Evidence Elsewhere?

(a) Most COGS exist only to play the Transportation MPO role played by our TAB (and have a similar time commitment).

(b) Most of them do so ineffectively

(i) Professor Orfield's paper

(ii) My observations from NLC Transportation Committee. In most states ...

1. MPOs fight with their state DOTs over funding priorities

2. MPOs bicker internally over parochial funding allocations and don't actually plan (We have our share of that, here, but we mediate it well. Over time, the money follows the population and no one questions the integrity of the execution.)

(iii) MPOs envy our ability to coordinate transportation and land use planning, which we have done far more effectively than any COG, including DRCOG.

b) Why not an Elected Metropolitan Council?

(a) Large Districts (2.5 times the size of a State Senate District)

(i) Would require significant fundraising

(ii) Portland Metro Councilmember example

(b) Likely a significant undervote

(i) Denver RTD (only four candidates filed for 8 seats)

(c) *Note: Members should be compensated fairly. Council stipends – Councilmembers receive 1099's, not W-2s – have been frozen at \$20K per year since [1995].*

c) Staggered Terms & revised appointment process

(a) Metro Cities, Citizens League of Governor's Blue Ribbon Panel all recommended these reforms.

(b) Would promote stability, reduce staff centricity.

(c) Would reduce gubernatorial meddling.

However, ;;;

(d) But would even further reduce public accountability.

(e) *Note: Governors are never held accountable for their meddling.*

d) Separate Planning and Operations

(a) I don't see any evidence that Portland or Denver are any more efficient than we are.

(b) [My airline example]

3) Question 3: What problems are we trying to solve and how would governance changes contribute to solving them?

(a) Unhappiness with SWLRT outcomes?

(b) Crime on Transit?

(c) Metro Mobility?

(d) SAC Charges?

(e) Overreaching on Housing Policy?

(f) MUSA Line?

4) Conclusion

The problems that I want to see solved would require even more Council authority and I have come around to supporting an elected Met Council because I understand that the Legislature would never grant an unelected Met Council these kinds of authorities:

- (a) Give the Council the backbone to stand up to local governments on municipal consent. (e.g. The tunnel)
- (b) Make Water a regional system (Tragedy of the commons)
- (c) Make Housing a regional system (this is our existential economic threat)