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I represent: Myself and my experience studying and working on regional planning.

I have several points to make after watching all meetings of and public testimony to the Metropolitan Governance Task Force.

**A Council of Governments is not the solution the region needs**, for a number of reasons. A Council of Governments will never be truly representative of the people because our region is too big and too subdivided into hundreds of cities, towns, and counties. The majority of the people would be represented by someone they did not have a say in voting for. Another problem with the Council of Governments (COG) model that has been proposed is that counties are given disproportional representation. A Hennepin County vote should be more than 10 times that of Carver County if population proportionality is taken into account. Hennepin and Ramsey counties account for about 58% of the region's population. Furthermore, is a Hennepin County Commissioner supposed to be accountable to nearly 1.3 million constituents on all the issues that come up in their county? Do they need to hire additional staff to support that? Are they Hennepin County staff or Council staff?

A Council of Governments assumes local elected officials will serve as Council Members. As several testifiers and task force members have pointed out, a decent Council Member spends about 20 hours per week on their Council duties. With more desired accountability (e.g., hosting local town halls, attending important local government meetings, responding timelier to constituent requests, meeting with concerned constituents), we could expect that to increase to 25 or 30, maybe even 40 hours per week. This is a lot to ask of even full-time local elected officials, of which there are few in the region.

To be clear, **this would also create the most powerful COG in the country**, with powers that have been put in place by the State (and Federal government via the State). There is no test of how a COG with this level of responsibility would function. Members should fear that this will only put more responsibility on Council staff to be accountable to the constituents solely based on the capacity of Council Members.

I've noticed that some discussions have talked about removing transit operations from the Council because of a conflict of interest. While a laudable goal based on a lot of the testimony, as far as I can tell, there has been zero discussion of what a governance structure for a separate transit operator would look like and the broader transit governance questions associated with that goal. Absent those proposals, I'm not sure that idea should be given any merit.

I have worked in regional planning for nearly 20 years and I've learned something about it that I think is relevant to your work: regional planning is really hard work that requires the consideration of very diverse perspectives to try to find common ground and agreeable solutions. To that point, I have a few suggestions for the Task Force to consider based on the discussions and proposals that I've seen so far:

- **The Council should remain a district-based governance model to honor proportional representation.** This exists in some capacity in all the proposals. Straying from this creates unequal accountability.
- **Council members should be recommended or selected by their district.** Whether direct election or district selection committees, this creates more accountability to the districts. The Chair should still be appointed by the Governor. There may be an opportunity to allow each district to establish their own selection process that recognizes their unique circumstances, though some features should probably be in law (i.e., must include local elected officials).
- **The time commitment of the job should be adequately described, compensated, and supported with staff.** Council members should take on the role knowing what they are signing up for and provide competitive compensation and specific aides to support their duties, so that we can attract talented people to these roles. Personally, I think this is too much to ask of any existing elected official and shortchanges the community they were elected to represent, as they'll be spending a lot of time working on metropolitan issues.
- Rather than recreating the wheel for Metro Transit governance, **consider establishing a transit advisory board on issues that relate to regional transit implementation**, similar to TAB but with a different focus and structure. Transit riders should be represented on such a board. The Transportation Advisory Board currently does not tackle transit issues, per state statute.
- Recognize that there are many forms of checks and balances already in place that could be enhanced or added to for accountability. For example, light projects must go through a municipal consent process that requires local elected officials to approve the projects. Met Council does not unilaterally make these decisions. Another example, the TAB develops the project selection recommendation for the Regional Solicitation. The Met Council only approves or sends it back.
- Consider adopting governance principles for the Met Council or direct their governance structure to adopt governing principles as a group, regardless of the structure. Principles might include acting regionally rather than parochially, always considering long-term impacts of decisions, etc.

I believe these changes are possible without compromising the region's MPO status to receive federal funds, though that is ultimately a federal decision. It's important to note that the TAB (and the dozens of other advisory groups the Council uses to inform its work) will remain in place for MPO issues. This is actually not uncommon. Both of your examples from Portland and Denver include advisory committees that handle the bulk of the MPO work that ultimately ends up at Portland Metro or DRCOG. Portland as the Joint Policy Advisory Committee on Transportation and DRCOG has the Regional Transportation Committee. They need these groups to include all the necessary perspectives required under federal MPO law. Most large regions have something like a "TAB" even if their primary function is a transportation MPO. Another benefit of the TAB is the presence of citizen and modal members. This is a role you might say is not too different from Council Members in that it is an application and appointment process, but the role is much less demanding and adds another layer of public participation to the process. With a restructured Met

Council governance model, the appointment of these members would benefit from any accountability improvements made there.

I'll end with one last question for you all to ponder with regards to staggered terms under the current governance model: if the Governor appoints mid-term Council Members but is not reelected, who are those Council Members accountable to?

A little about myself. I've worked on regional planning for 20+ years, a large portion at the Met Council. I've worked with TAB, Council Members, the Land Use Advisory Committee, dozens of working groups, technical staff from all over, city councils, county boards, transit provider boards, MnDOT and other state agencies, Minnesota Freight Advisory Committee, transportation management organizations, neighborhood groups, chambers, developers, consultants, residents, non-profits, businesses, schools and colleges, railroads, parks agencies, airports, and tribes... and that was just last year! I grew up in Mankato, both rural and in the city itself. I went to college in the Twin Cities. I've spent a lot of the last 15 years talking to other regions about their governance models and trying to learn about their successes and challenges; I met with Doug Rex almost 10 years ago. I've been to every city and nearly every township in the region, many times if it has a nice dog park or a brewery.

First and foremost, I believe regional planning is fundamental to the success of a place. I also believe in the Met Council's mission and am proud of the work we do. Speaking only for myself, I want to work on these issues regardless of what governance structure exists.