MINNESOTA
INTER-COUNTY ASSOCIATION

Sent Via Email

January 14, 2024

Metropolitan Governance Task Force
600 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
Centennial Building, 1st Floor
St. Paul, MN 55155

The Minnesota Inter-County Association (MICA), and its metropolitan county members and Anoka County colleagues, appreciate the diligent and ongoing work of the Metropolitan Governance Task Force to "study and evaluate options to reform and reconstitute governance of the Metropolitan Council" (*Minnesota Laws 2023, Chapter 68, Article 4, Section 123)*.

Our Association fully supports regional governance and collaboration.

We believe reform of metropolitan regional governance is needed, and that the most effective governance structure will be one that can gain the support of the seven-county area.

A common thread running through the diverse viewpoints shared at public engagements and Task Force meetings is that the current metropolitan governance structure does not always perform well for the varied needs of the region.

Further, there is a broadly held perspective that the region would be better served if the composition of the council was selected directly by, and was accountable to, the region.

MICA has long supported a council of governments (COG) model for our metropolitan region. That support is grounded in an awareness that local governments and residents of the region are key constituents of metropolitan government. Additionally, strategically navigating the intersection of local government functions and regional responsibilities is a core role of regional governance; a role that is best achieved by having county and local government representation and expertise serving on the council.

A COG model can and should reflect the principles of proportionality and transparency. We support a COG model for our metropolitan region that achieves that combination of objectives by:

- Having a county commissioner from each metropolitan county serve on the council,
- Increasing the number of council districts while setting boundaries to achieve proportionality, ensuring that a balance of local community voices is reflected in decision-making, and minimizing cross-county boundary lines, and
- Providing for the representative of each district to be appointed by the local governments of that district.

We also support staggered terms for the members of the COG, but do not believe staggered terms or adjustments to the current nominating process alone are sufficient reforms. We additionally support that metropolitan transit construction, operation, and implementation functions be separated from regional transit corridor (MPO) planning.

We welcome opportunities to continuing working with the Task Force, policymakers, and all stakeholders to flesh out specific proposals for implementing a COG model of metropolitan regional governance that strengthens accountability, transparency, and collaboration.

Again, thank you for your service and your thoughtful commitment to completing the work of the Task Force.

Stan Karwoski, Washington County
Laurie Halverson, Dakota County
Jon Ulrich, Scott County
Gayle Degler, Carver County
Scott Schulte, Anoka County

Matt Massman, *Executive Director*
Minnesota Inter-County Association