

# **APPENDIX**

## **C**

September 18, 2023

To the members of the Legislative Commission on Metropolitan Government:

You have been given the important task of refashioning the Metropolitan Council. As people who attended almost all the public meetings planning the Southwest light-rail line, We offer some observations we hope will be helpful.

The prevailing narrative, in the wake of SWLRT mistakes, is “the appointed Met Council doesn’t listen to the public and should be replaced by an elected Council whose members would be more accountable.” But the facts are more complicated, and it’s not clear how an elected council would avoid the mistakes that were made.

First, we don’t think the diagnosis that the Council was unresponsive to public opinion is correct. Second, the proposed solution might handicap its function as a planning agency able to focus on the entire area rather than local politics. Third, since the Council has had considerable success in other areas and did a good job building two earlier light rail lines, an incremental approach to change might be wise.

1. The current narrative about SWLRT is alluringly simple: the Council didn’t listen to warnings from neighbors living near the Kenilworth tunnel, and problems ensued. In fact, the Met Council listened very carefully, but didn’t agree, because the Council judged that alternative routes wouldn’t meet cost and ridership criteria needed to qualify for federal funding. These neighbors (who advocated for an Uptown route instead) then sued the Met Council for not following federal rules about route selection. They lost in court but this caused a long delay in the project at a time of rapidly rising labor and material costs.

Mistakes that the Council did make included failure to negotiate a plan acceptable to these neighbors (for instance, acquiring more real estate in the tunnel area) and to point out from the start that the Minneapolis city council could pass a municipal consent vote anyway. Also the Council accepted reassurance from both internal and external engineering consultants that the sandy soil in the area would make tunnel construction easier than it proved to be. As laypersons, council members were dependent on technical experts to understand these details.

2. An all-elected council would have more credibility but it’s hard to see how it would avoid such problems. The risk is that elections would favor candidates focused on voters’ short-term concerns. Democracy in real life doesn’t always work as hoped, and in particular doesn’t tend to reward long-term thinking. The Founding Fathers foresaw this, and created two legislative branches, one accountable to voters for re-election every two years, and another with six years to do what they thought was right even if unpopular.



### **Problems a reformulated Council will need to consider:**

People don't like to pay taxes

People don't want to be inconvenienced now for the benefit of future generations

People who own cars don't want to pay for transit

People who don't encounter poverty in their daily lives have difficulty imagining what life is like for poor people and transit-dependent people

Low-income people have less political power and don't vote as often

Children, the people most in need of long range planning, don't vote at all

People don't pay much attention to down-ballot races

Wealthy people will influence elections in their self-interest

Young people who are scared to death of global warming have little political power

People have scant knowledge about research into what has been proven to work

People don't understand what civil engineering can and can't do

### **Some possible solutions:**

Make voting districts large enough to make it hard for special interests to "buy" an election, e.g. ten districts of 330,000 apiece for our seven county area

Include some appointed members to ensure representation of groups lacking political power (children, young adults, low-income people) and to help Council members understand technical aspects of their decisions

Include some former mayors, to lend valuable experience, just as corporate and non-profit boards routinely include immediate past presidents

Include some urban planning academics with deep knowledge of what has been shown to work elsewhere, to help guide discussion. For example, a key factor predicting which children will escape poverty as adults is having parents with a short trip to work (<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/07/upshot/transportation-emerges-as-crucial-to-escaping-poverty.html>); a short commute means more time for parenting

Include someone with a civil engineering background

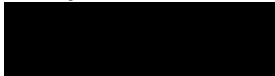
Create a committee consisting of all living former governors, rather than just the current one, to make these appointments in a less partisan way

3. A part-elected and part-appointed Council could improve both planning and execution. Ten elected plus seven appointed members from the groups mentioned above would equal the current size of the council.

Richard Adair

 Minneapolis

Barry Schade

 Minneapolis

James Schoettler



October 10, 2023

Members of the Metropolitan Governance Task Force  
600 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.  
State Office Building, Room 72  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Sent by email

Dear Task Force Members:

I am a member of Citizen Advocates for Regional Transit, which will have additional comments later. But I am writing today largely from my personal experience and to say why I believe it is time for an elected Metropolitan Council.

From 1971-1987 I was a member of the staff of the Metropolitan Council and have remained keenly interested in the Council ever since. I mention these dates, not to emphasize how old I am, but to emphasize that we have a half-century of experience with metropolitan governance that has been overwhelmingly successful.

The defining character of this success has not been a take-over of local governance, but a strengthening of local governance, by (i) identifying and delivering regional services in an efficient way that individual units of government could not do well on their own; and (ii) doing it in a way that involves the local governments in ways that best utilize their local capabilities.

Sewers are a good example; we have a local community collection system, managed by the local government, and a regional interceptor system that conveys the wastewater, often many miles, to a regional treatment facility. This arrangement has given us one of the best and most efficient metropolitan wastewater systems in the country.

Another example is the Regional Parks System. Counties and county parks go together like bacon and eggs, but only one of the seven counties had both the wealth and land areas to identify, acquire and develop the regional parks on their own when the land was available. At the same time, there were cities that supported - on their own - beautiful parks like Como and Minnehaha that drew people from all over the metropolitan area. The key was to create an organization that could work with the counties and local governments to identify future park sites throughout the region as well as existing regional parks and develop a funding process that enabled the counties and local governments to acquire, develop and operate these beautiful

regional parks. Today we have 56 regional parks, 400 miles of trails and over 63 million visits per year, all managed by the counties or local governments.

There are numerous other services that can be mentioned, including the 911 system, the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area under the National Park Service which originated through the Met Council as a Critical Area designation, and the Agricultural Preserves Act. All are accomplishments of this organization.

Back in '71, when I started to work for the Council, it was just four years old; but the issue of an *elected* council was still in the air and has remained in the air to the present time.

In my view, an *appointed* Council was the right way to go - at the start. It gave the Governor and the Legislature the opportunity to set the example by appointing people with the intellectual capacity to take a metropolitan perspective on the many issues put before them, like whether to build a new airport; and especially, the big one at the time, sewers.

With over a half century of experiment and experience, I think the evidence is overwhelming that our type of metropolitan governance works. It has assumed greater responsibilities and a greater role in the lives of the residents of this metropolitan area. It was an experiment in 1967; it is an essential instrument of government today.

At the core are two things: (i) a metropolitan perspective and (ii) a willingness to work together with all the counties and municipalities.

The Met Council has not supplanted local government, it has strengthened and enhanced local government. In my opinion, there otherwise would have been widespread consolidation and annexation. And you would still not have accomplished anywhere near what you have accomplished so far with the Met Council.

But it has long since been time for the Council to be elected.

An elected Council will increase awareness in the public of these many services that make life better for us. It will shed more light on the complex and long-lived issues that face us today and need their participation to be adequately addressed. It will draw from the public the validity of the folks in charge and will assure that the Council is responsive directly to the public it serves.

The Council will function better with a clean one person – one vote approach to drawing Council districts and overlapping terms will assure at least half of the Council understands what is happening, which greatly reduces staff domination.

There are many fundamental issues that still need to be addressed by the Council. This Task Force has already named transit, water supply and climate change; that's a mouthful there, and there's lots more to be done. And it is important that the Task Force identify weaknesses in the

current processes of the organization and recommend changes that will enhance governance and accountability going forward.

The key is that you already have this extraordinary organization. It is time now to put its leadership into the hands of the people.

Thank you, Members of the Task Force on Metropolitan Governance.

James Schoettler

**Lakes and Parks Alliance of Minneapolis**  
2121 Drew Avenue South  
Minneapolis, MN 55416-3621

October 3, 2023

Members of the Metropolitan Governance Task Force  
600 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.  
State Office Building, Room 72  
St. Paul, MN 55155

*Sent by email*

Dear Task Force Members:

We are the board members of the Lakes and Parks Alliance of Minneapolis (LPA), writing to clarify and correct the record as represented in the September 19, 2023 letter submitted to you by Mr. Richard Adair and Mr. Barry Schade.

Their letter states: “[LPA] sued the Met Council for not following federal rules about [Southwest LRT] route selection. They lost in court but this caused a long delay in the project at a time of rapidly rising labor and material costs. “

- To clarify: Our LPA lawsuit asserted that the SWLRT route was selected before the environmental review was done. (In his decision, Judge Tunheim wrote regarding Minneapolis’s municipal consent for the route: “[T]he Court has determined that the MOUs the Council signed with Minneapolis and St. Louis Park are what the Council says they are: promises that can be broken. If the MOUs were binding and they limited environmental review to a single route, the Court would be compelled to find improper predetermination under NEPA. [National Environmental Policy Act]”)
- To correct: The lawsuit did not stop or slow down the construction — not for one moment. The suit involved no injunctions and had no effect on operations. The delay had to do with the changed route which resulted in the selection of the Kenilworth corridor very late in the process, which in turn required a redo of the EIS, which then caused a delay in completing and receiving the full funding agreement with the FTA. In addition, time was wasted in the confusion about how local funding would be achieved; this involved the dissolution of CTIB. There was a debacle involving the selection of a contractor, a process that had to be redone. And, finally, the reason for most of the massive delay in completing the project has to do with the difficulty digging the tunnel — a problem predicted by residents but ignored by the Met Council — adding years to the project.

We do agree with Mr. Adair and Mr. Schade that the Met Council should have elected members. That would help create public accountability.

We would be happy to provide you with additional information about our experience with the Met Council that would help you with your work.

Thank you for your service on the Task Force.

Very truly yours,

David Lilly, Chair  
Stuart Chazin  
Curt Gunsbury  
Courtney Kiernat  
Mary Pattock  
George Puzak

—



# ***Citizen Advocates for Regional Transit***

***Universal Transit Mobility through Unified Transit Governance***

**[www.C-A-R-T.org](http://www.C-A-R-T.org)**

**Testimony for the Metropolitan Council Governance Task Force hearing October 25, 2023**

**To: Co-Chairs Rep. Hornstein, Sen. Pratt, and Members of the Task Force:**

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding Governance of the Metropolitan Council. We recognize that the Metropolitan Council controls and coordinates many functions across the Metro area. Our comments will be directed to improvement of the planning and control of the Metro transit system. We urge the Task Force to consider and adopt needed changes to the transit planning and implementation process and accountability structure, as part of your overall Governance recommendation.

Our organization advocates for the concept of Universal Transit Mobility (UTM):

- Defined as the ability of an individual to travel from any location in the Metro Transit Tax District to any other location in a reasonable length of time, using public transportation.
- Provided via a coordinated SYSTEM of public transit throughout the Metropolitan Transit service area, comprising LRT, BRT, Local Bus, Ride-Sharing and other transit modes.
- Developed through a process of Unified Transit Governance (UTG) by a government agency having responsibility and accountability for all aspects of planning, implementing, and operating the public transit SYSTEM, in coordination with counties and municipalities within the transit service area.

We believe that the Metropolitan Council is the best positioned entity to accept and carry out this role.

The following addendum is a brief discussion of

- The need for UTM
- Problems with the current system of Transit development
- The recommended organization, responsibility and accountability for UTG.

*We respectfully request the Metropolitan Council Governance Task Force to recommend restructuring Metro Transit functions and responsibilities as part of their overall Governance recommendation.*

Respectfully Submitted,

Jay Severance and James Schoettler

For the Associates of Citizen Advocates for Regional Transit, <https://c-a-r-t.org/team>



## **Achieving Universal Transit Mobility (UTM) through Unified Transit Governance (UTG)**

The public and their legislators are familiar with the troubles afflicting major Transitway projects in the Twin Cities Metro. Recently the long-planned Rush Line /Purple Line aBRT project ran into local opposition, and problems with the SWLRT and Bottineau projects have been widely publicized. The public may not be familiar with the root cause of these troubles, which results from past measures splitting off the responsibility for planning and delineation of Transitway projects to the counties, while assigning responsibility for implementation and operation of the projects to the Metropolitan Council.

With this complication, the Met Council inherits whatever deals or agreements were previously made – or failed to be made or were incompetently made - by the counties to obtain agreement on the route. Problems usually surface in the implementation phase handled by the Met Council, although caused by the county.

In the 2022 session of the Minnesota Legislature HF 3718 was introduced by retiring Representative Alice Hausman, to establish a framework for Regional Transit objectives and development responsibilities. That framework includes the following legislative mandates:

1. **To establish Universal Transit Mobility (UTM)** as the new and clear goal for investments in and the operation of regional public transit: to enable anyone within the Transit Taxing District (TTD) to reach any other location within the TTD in a reasonable amount of time using public transit.
2. **To establish Unified Transit Governance (UTG)** to provide over-all responsibility and accountability for Transit development and encourage more local government participation in the assessment of need, planning for intra and inter-municipal transit and improving transit accessibility.

### **Why UTM? “You can’t get there from here.”**

Universal Transit Mobility can be defined as the ability of an individual to travel from any location in the Metro Transit Tax District (TTD) to any other location in the TTD in a reasonable length of time, using public transportation.

The dominant transportation system of the region comprises thousands of miles of roads, highways and parking, costs billions of dollars per year and consumes 30% of our landscape. This system can be said to provide “Universal Automotive Mobility” (UAM), primarily for people with access to automobiles. However, a substantial number of people throughout the region do

not qualify, cannot afford, are unable to drive or are unwilling to fight traffic. And there is a much larger group who would prefer to ride transit, if UTM was available.

The capacity of this auto-centric system is being challenged by growth of population and utilization for commercial delivery vehicles, resulting in more congestion and less mobility. The solutions are to either build more roads or utilize the existing system more efficiently through an expanded and coordinated transit system of Transitways, Busways, and ride sharing, with the target of achieving UTM.

What we need is good public transit. What is it? It is not more routes downtown. It is, instead, a replication of the structural objective of our vehicular road system: the ability to get from any location within the urban service area to any destination within the urban service area in a reasonable amount of time. This is the objective of UTM.

Our current public transit system, and major investments, are predominantly focused on the two downtowns. But most people don't go downtown. Today, there are dozens of "downtowns" around the Metro. Jobs, services, and shopping will always be widely distributed across the urban region. The public transit system needs to reflect this reality. It needs to support freedom of movement and enable any transit rider in the TTD to reach any other location within the TTD in a reasonable amount of time.

UTM is different from the legacy downtown transit systems, although it certainly will use most of the existing downtown route facilities. It is a system of bus, BRT and LRT transit networks (and related components like ride-share and autonomous vehicles) throughout the urban service area, operated together as one system, that brings transit accessibility to every part of the urban service area.

UTM is built up from the local to the regional area. It begins with individual local governments creating a knowledge base of the transit needs of those who don't drive and those who prefer not to drive. What destinations are most desirable, when and where, both within the local governmental area and across its boundaries? This knowledge needs to become a part of the transportation section of the local comprehensive plan. It needs to become a consideration in all zoning, land use and public service planning; and it must be a consideration in public and private development in the community.

Regional transit planning must consider the local and cross-border transit needs identified in the local plans and create a regional transit system that meets these needs in aggregate. As connectivity increases, these routes and stations will enhance the value of all the properties connected by the system and will reduce the number of vehicles on the region's roads and highways, making them more accessible to those vehicles which do need to be on the road and highway system.

One of the most important, yet most neglected, aspects of public transit is the local role in making public transit accessible. A bus stop or station has little benefit if riders cannot reach it. Yet local governments are responsible for local planning, zoning, regulation, traffic management, sidewalk design and management, crosswalk design and management, traffic control, sidewalk design and maintenance, snow and ice removal, etc.

The local comprehensive plan should identify areas of transit accessibility around all bus stops and stations, should have policies for how this accessibility should be provided, locations and

needs for improvement and a schedule of projects to upgrade the appropriate aspects of accessibility.

## **Why Unified Transit Governance (UTG)?**

### **System integrity and Accountability**

UTG assigns responsibility for planning, developing, constructing, operating, and maintaining transit service and transit facilities to the Metropolitan Council and it incorporates a Stakeholder process that includes public hearings, seeking input from all levels of government and pursuing consensus-oriented dispute resolution with and among these units of government.

Restructuring of the Metropolitan Council will be needed to implement these responsibilities. However, it only makes sense to assign full responsibility, from design to implementation of the regional transit system to the agency with over fifty years of experience doing regional system planning and operation, provided the cities and counties have input.

UTG will bring all TTD municipalities into transit planning and participation in UTM through their comprehensive plans and invite municipal recommendations regarding mobility and transportation improvements. Traditional transit planning has exaggerated the importance of dense urban centers, minimized that of suburban areas and ignored the travel interactions among suburban communities. Local governments in general need to do more analysis and generate better understanding of the intra and inter municipal transit needs of their residents. And with this information, they need to participate in the development of measures to serve those transit needs.

### **The UTM-UTG Goal**

***The Legislature should charge the Met Council with implementing Universal Transit Governance by charging the Met Council with undertaking a regional transit system re-design that responds to the needs of all stakeholders, and places full accountability on the Council for defining the parameters, establishing metrics, funding, building, operating and coordinating all activities to achieve UTM by 2050.***

***The Legislature should also charge local governments with responsibility for identifying and reporting on the needs of their residents for transit access and steps needed to provide their residents with reasonable access to transit stations and stops.***

***We urge the Metropolitan Council Governance Task Force to consider restructuring Metro Transit functions and responsibilities as recommended here, as part of their overall Governance recommendations.***

# Metropolitan Governance

**M**y name is Mathews Hollinshead, and I serve as one of two Transit Modal Representatives on the Metropolitan Council's Transportation Advisory Board — the TAB. I am also Conservation Chair of the North Star Chapter of the Sierra Club and a convener of Citizen Advocates for Regional Transit (CART). Today I am speaking as a TAB member, but I also want to express my agreement with separate testimony submitted by Jay Severance and Jim Schoettler, who are fellow members of CART. I am not speaking today officially for the Sierra Club.

As you know, the TAB enables the Metropolitan Council to act as our region's Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), under a waiver from the Federal Government, because the TAB includes elected officials.

I urge this task force to recommend direct election of the Metropolitan Council members, not a Council of Governments (COG), which is closer to TAB's structure. Met Council members should also be full-time, given the complexity and range of the Council's responsibilities. What the Council does now, with almost 50 years of experience, is so vital, so essential, that it cannot be left to part-time, indirect accountability.

For proof, consider transportation, about which everyone has strong opinions, given how we have reconstructed metro regions since the advent of mass-produced automobiles.

The Twin Cities has relatively low congestion and high accessibility — if you happen to own a personal motor vehicle. It is the opposite if you do not. This access is unacceptably expensive — \$12,000+ per personal vehicle according to the AAA, with millions of motor vehicles on our roads and streets, requiring unsustainable percentages of space and pavement just to park and store, which is most of the time. The Met Council tries to mitigate this, but lacks direct accountability to the public and — amazingly — does not plan our biggest transit investments.

It is very strange — almost incomprehensible, in fact — that transitways — rail or concrete guideways such as the Blue, Green and Gold lines — which are our most expensive and should be our most regional transit component — are not planned or designed by the region. Instead county “regional rail authorities” plan this most expensive and regional component — the component that is supposed to be, according to funding criteria, “of regional significance.” Although the Met Council is at the table, it rarely intervenes decisively and early, when decisions carry the most weight. Cities, on the other hand, participate vigorously from the start.

Rather than creating one ubiquitous, regional network as they should, transitways thus take so long to develop individually that everyone suffers project fatigue. This, in turn, reinforces our strongest cultural and economic bias: the personal motor vehicle. That's bad news on many levels: climate, safety, health, sprawl and, most obviously, public and private expense.

Issues ignored or unseen by counties during the part of the process they control only surface later and are then blamed on the Met Council. Southwest LRT and Bottineau Blue Line Extension never secured explicit, binding legal agreements from freight railroads with controlling interests affecting their options. The Green Line decisively exceeded expectations until Covid hit — but could have included signal priority and cut-and-cover or tunnel grade-separation, combining all the benefits of both density and speed. The Riverview Corridor, which should be a regional line connecting the entire East Metro to the airport at an average speed faster than the 54 bus, is designed instead to run on the surface in mixed traffic coming out of downtown St. Paul — a ridership killer. Cut-and-cover or tunnel grade-separation here is an example of what we don't consider under the current governance structure.

It is clear that this arrangement serves the status quo at the expense of the future. Transitways can be both fast and also serve density. Post-Covid, they should shift the planning of new lines from hub-and-spoke — the old commuting paradigm, based on our two downtowns — to a regional system with many hubs connected by crosstown lines, giving everyone what our CART group calls universal transit mobility (UTM). Travel by car already works this way. Drivers live, work, go to school, shop, attend religious services, go to parks, attend entertainment and sports events and/or socialize across every municipal and county border in the region. There are many crosstown belt lines for motor vehicles — Highways 62, 36, 100, 169, 494, and 694. Transit, to compete, should have the same.

But it won't happen under current Met Council governance structure, or under a COG. By definition, counties and cities govern only to their borders. It's naive to expect them to plan or operate regionally on their own. The Met Council has proven its competence in its rapid roll-out of Arterial Rapid Bus (ABRT) lines. If it becomes a council of governments, the region risks losing its ability to advance equity, address climate change, or provide affordable mobility for all. Direct elections, by contrast, will give these goals legitimacy and accountability nothing else can.

Direct, proportional election of Met Council citizen members is not big government. It is better government — government that is truly reflective of the full region. (Some version of the TAB and/or its committees might stay as purely advisory bodies, but the Met Council and its committees should plan, initiate and design all regional transportation, including transitways.)

To avoid political polarization, provide continuity and avoid staff domination, it is essential that terms be staggered. This, along with direct elections, will produce stronger, more accountable outcomes.

Thank you for the very important work you are doing, and for this opportunity to testify.

Mathews Hollinshead  
Transit Modal Representative  
Transportation Advisory Board  
Metropolitan Council of the Twin Cities  
651-492-0645  
2114 Pinehurst Ave.  
St. Paul, MN 55116



# Resilient Cities & Communities

Visionary People. Vibrant Places. Regenerative Futures.

Date: December 8, 2023

To: Metropolitan Governance Task Force Members [lcc@lcc.mn.gov](mailto:lcc@lcc.mn.gov) <https://www.lcc.mn.gov/mgtf/>  
Chair, Rep. Frank Hornstein Taylor Kohler, Research Analyst (651) 296-6034 [taylor.koehler@lcc.mn.gov](mailto:taylor.koehler@lcc.mn.gov)

From: **Sean Gosiewski**, Executive Director, **Resilient Cities and Communities**  
612 250-0389 [sean@rccmn.co](mailto:sean@rccmn.co) Link to our comments <https://rccmn.co/metro-governance/>  
2730 East 31st Street Minneapolis MN 55406 Visionary Leaders. Vibrant Places. Regenerative Futures

**Subject: How a well-paid & elected Met Council can accelerate Regional Climate Implementation**

**Let's maintain mutual accountability and transparency** to achieve region-wide climate mitigation & adaptation goals on time with state agencies, Met Council, cities, counties & partners.

**Verbal Testimony to the task force** Dec 8, 2023, from Sean Gosiewski, Resilient Cities and Communities Begins at 1:17:30 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xMkfGpVtNU&t=4808s>

An **Elected Met Council** will have both a mandate **from local voters** and the **time needed** to receive new ideas from stakeholders and cities and counties to support breakthrough solutions on complex issues including climate change, transit safety, housing supply and reversing racial wealth gaps and health disparities. Elected Met Council Members would be covering areas larger than county commissioners & should receive commensurate pay, so they can focus on their elected roles.

In addition, we need specific working groups within our current Met Council to maintain focus, momentum and mutual accountability and transparency for climate implementation

- **Met Council Climate Change Working Group**, actively supports and maintains accountability with departments to implement the [Met Council's Climate Action work plan](#) for operations &
- Launch a new **Metro Regional Climate Change working group** – as a joint sub committee of the **Land Use Advisory Committee and Transportation Advisory Board** to implement the new **Region Wide Metro Climate Action Plan**, Met Council staff are currently developing with [EPA CPRG funding](#).
  - o With representatives from implementation experts (nonprofits and businesses) and representatives from metro cities and counties leading on climate

Let's follow the example of dozens of **successful Regional Climate Collaboratives** across the U.S. here in the Twin Cities to scale up **climate-friendly regional investments** and **local policy adoption & projects** by metro cities and counties to achieve our climate goals on time.

See five good national examples <https://rccmn.co/regionalclimatecollaboratives/>

Congratulations on the Met Council's excellent current local climate planning resources created within the Community Development Department <https://metro council.org/Planning/Climate.aspx>

- [GHG Strategy Planning Tool](#)
- [GHG Inventory](#)
- [Growing Shade](#)
- [Flood/Heat Maps](#)

However, current Met Council resources are voluntary for cities and city leaders have few opportunities for groups of cities to meet together to assess their city-wide Green House Gas wedges and to plan and implement policies and projects to address all their city-wide GHG wedges, i.e. reducing natural gas use in commercial and residential buildings, reducing VMT and advancing transportation electrification.

Many city elected leaders, commission volunteers and city staff I am working would like the **Met Council to take a more active role in in guiding and supporting cities to take effective climate actions.**

For example – <https://rccmn.co/buildings/>

to reduce natural gas use in new and existing buildings residential and commercial–

we need to **line up high impact actions** → examples of **successful projects & policies** →

→ **strategy specific funding guidance** to combine MN, federal funding, tax credits, utility \$

**Let's advance Collaborative, transparent implementation of the Met Council's \$1 million dollar EPA climate pollution reduction planning grant and future EPA CPRG Implementation grants between**

<https://www.epa.gov/inflation-reduction-act/climate-pollution-reduction-grants>

**AMAZING OPPORTUNITY** for metro cities to become eligible to apply with the Met Council &/or MPCA by April 1 2023 for a Federal IRA Climate Pollution Reduction Implementation Grants (\$200 to \$500 million)

<https://rccmn.co/topics/federal-climate-pollution-reduction-grants/>

- **Resilient Cities and Communities** would be glad to partner with the Met Council and metro counties to convene interested cities for meet ups to prioritize actions to include in the Met Council's Climate Action Plan once you receive the planning funds. <https://rccmn.co/county-clusters/>

### Benefits

- **Large cities with climate action plans could update their plans** to make the most of opportunities to leverage new IIJA funds and IRA tax credits with the support of [new MN Dept of Commerce staff](#),
- **Builds upon the [Met Council's climate action work plan](#)** for operations to enable additional cities and counties to reduce GHGs in their operations with functional teams (buildings, fleets, geothermal, etc.)
- **Influencing the Met Council's Transportation Policy Plan for 2050** to include VMT and transportation electrification strategies (using [MNDOT's STAC](#) recommendations) & MNDOT Federal IIJA Carbon Reduction Program guidelines to local jurisdictions prioritizing local transportation investments / <http://www.dot.state.mn.us/carbon-reduction-program/>
- **Opportunity to convene interested cities by county to develop climate action work plans** using the Met Council's new GHG scenario planning tool reports ([see RCC proposal](#)) All Metro Cities will be required to include community wide Climate Action Plans as part of their 2050 Comprehensive Plan Updates.
- **Opportunity to convene cities experiencing redevelopment** to plan ways they can support developers to build next zero buildings with network geothermal and mobility hubs ([see RCC proposal](#)) <https://rccmn.co/21st-century-communities/>

Let's manage **collaborative multi-jurisdictional climate implementation** within

**ONE open-source collaborative strategy engagement platform** to sync up, investments, staffing and resources to implement our **Minnesota, Metro, County and City Climate Action plans**

**We can Streamline/Facilitate Collaborative Implementation of Local/Regional Climate Action Plans** with city, county & regional teams using the [Insight Vision Strategy Engagement Platform](#) with training/[coaching](#) (nationally-recognized, secure, easy to use, soon to be open source) to track goals → benchmarks → actions → strategy maps → team members → funding sources → project outcomes/case studies → reporting

- **Nationally Recognized [Insight Vision](#) Strategy Engagement Platform**
- <https://www.insightformation.com/insightvision>

Metropolitan Governance Task Force:

Because of the failure of the Met Council to respond in a timely and effective manner to notifications by many of us about the safety crisis on LRT and project mismanagement of the SW LRT, my preference would be for membership to be either completely elected or a mix of elected and appointed with majority elected. I was a strong advocate (letters to the editor and otherwise) for development of LRT, but was subsequently extremely disappointed by the failure to enforce fare compliance and good conduct of passengers. Multiple times I contacted my Met Council representative, as did many others. There was no significant response until the newspapers were filled with negative stories that threatened the end of LRT expansion altogether. Even then, the response was tepid and only marginally effective. Likewise, the SW LRT routing appears to have been poorly chosen with a result in extremely high cost overruns, despite considerable public warning about that issue. Governance of Met Council must change to make it responsive to legitimate public concerns.

Thanks,

Les Everett

[REDACTED]

Falcon Heights, MN 55113

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]



Dear Metropolitan Governance Task Force,

I am writing to request the restructuring of the Met Council. I am concerned about the wasteful spending of the Met Council on the proposed Blue Line Light Rail Extension and the currently overbudget SWLRT. The millions of taxpayer dollars they continue to put toward a project that was initially planned nearly 20 years ago, was supposed to already be completed in 2021 and yet does not have a defined path forward is astounding. Additionally, the lack of review of alternate transit options that are significantly less expensive and less disruptive continues to be a concern that we the taxpayers will continue to dump billions of dollars into their failed vanity projects.

Minnesota residents cannot continue to spend their hard-earned tax dollars on a project that is far behind schedule and faces significant opposition from the communities it will destroy. The Met Council as it stands does not have any responsibility to act in the best interest of the citizens it serves and continues to show disregard for the communities impacted. I urge you to consider the restructuring of the Met Council to prevent such wasteful spending in the future.

Attached you will find a petition from residents of 918 Lofts that has been submitted to the Met Council outlining our concerns with their project management. This has been met with little to no meaningful response from the Met Council which continues to show their disregard for the communities that they are supposed to serve.

Additionally, we have a change.org petition with over 600 signatures expressing concerns with not only the BLRT extension but the lack of review of new modern transit modes.  
<https://chnq.it/PNfHpsNsjn>

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Matthew Bruns

Subject: Petition Opposing Light Rail on N. 10th Ave

City, County, and State leadership,

We, the undersigned residents of the 918 Lofts, strongly oppose the proposed light rail project on N. 10th Ave. We are united in our belief that such a project would have negative repercussions for our community, and we implore you to consider our collective concerns as you evaluate this proposal.

The 918 Lofts is not just a building; it's our home, a place where we have come together to create a vibrant and harmonious living environment. The potential introduction of a light rail system on N. 10th Ave could disrupt the flow of traffic, cause traffic congestion, and pose safety hazards for both pedestrians and drivers. The construction phase alone might lead to increased noise, road closures, and restricted access to our building, severely inconveniencing residents and visitors alike.



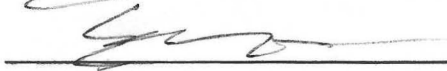


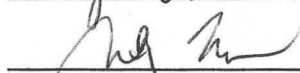
Moreover, our community's unique aesthetic and character would be at risk. The presence of overhead lines, platforms, and stations that accompany a light rail system could mar the beauty of our surroundings, ultimately impacting property values and diminishing the quality of life we cherish at 918 Lofts.

While we recognize the necessity of efficient transportation options, we believe that alternative routes and transportation modes should be thoroughly explored to minimize the adverse effects on our community. There may be more suitable locations or alternate transit solutions that better align with the identity and atmosphere of our neighborhood.

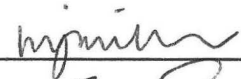

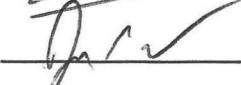
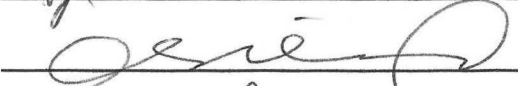
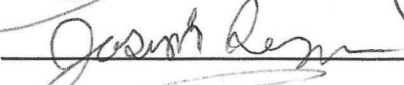



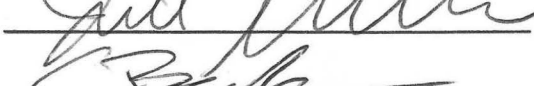
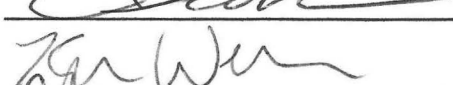
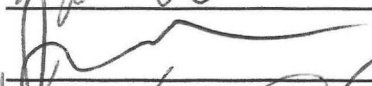
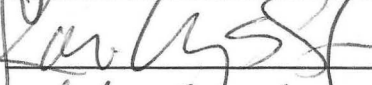

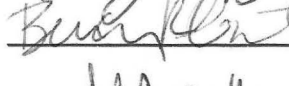
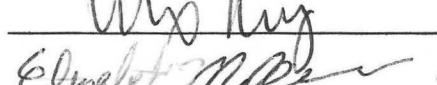
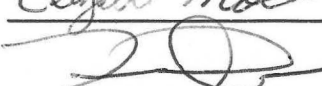
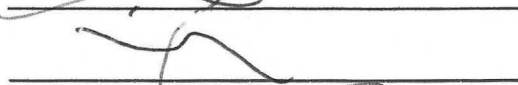
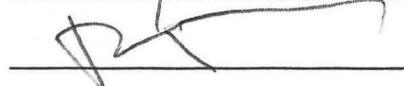


In light of these collective concerns, we, the residents of 918 Lofts, vehemently oppose the proposed light rail on N. 10th Ave. We urge you to prioritize our voices and consider the long-term impact of this project on our living environment and quality of life.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We eagerly await your response and hope that our united stand will be acknowledged and respected.

Sincerely,

Resident Name (print):	Unit:	Signature:
<u>Matthew Brons</u>	<u>301</u>	<u></u>
<u>Sennett Chen</u>	<u>104</u>	<u></u>
<u>Erika Cianciaruso</u>	<u>104</u>	<u></u>
<u>DELANY BREITBACH</u>	<u>309</u>	<u></u>
<u>Elizabeth Miller</u>	<u>202</u>	<u></u>
<u>Mike Connelly</u>	<u>301</u>	<u></u>

We, the residents of 918 Lofts, vehemently oppose the proposed light rail on N. 10th Ave. We urge you to prioritize our voices and consider the long-term impact of this project on our living environment and quality of life.

Resident Name (print):	Unit:	Signature:
Megan Miller	203	
Erika Cianciaruso	104	
James Lyle	108	
Erica Schmid	101	
Joseph Rezac	210	
Rich Sanisto	203	
Sarahanna Nickel	207	
Spencer Nickel	107	
Jill Weber	105	
CHRISTOPHER BECK	305	
Ryan Weber	105	
John Murdoch	307	
KARI LYSFJORD	307	
Adam Coontz	306	
Becky Coontz	306	
Amy Kelly	209	
Wick Miller	202	
Rob Pedro Wolcott	201	
Hayley Nixon	310	
Robert Newmex	204	

We, the residents of 918 Lofts, vehemently oppose the proposed light rail on N. 10th Ave. We urge you to prioritize our voices and consider the long-term impact of this project on our living environment and quality of life.

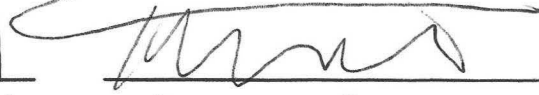
Resident Name (print):

Unit:

Signature:

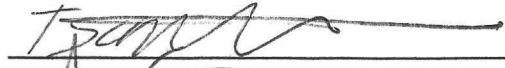
Katherine Davis

211



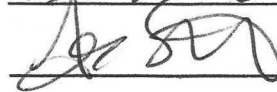
Teddy Schmitt

211



Amelia Steinkraws

205



Representative Wiens,

Thank you for inviting the ISD 834 School Board to attend today's Met Council Task Force Hearing. It was an enlightening experience. I did not prepare to speak, but want to share my thoughts with you as I'm reflecting on today's testimony.

First, our Superintendent was spot on with his assessment of the downstream impact of Met Council decisions on our school district. The expansion in Lake Elmo has directly impacted our district and has created additional challenges as we plan to implement our newly approved bond.

As plans for restructuring the Met Council continue, I believe there may be an opportunity to add school districts somewhere into the equation. To my knowledge, cities are not required by the Met Council to account for the educational services that school districts are legally required to provide the new residents brought in through expanded development. While increased enrollment is wonderful, the reality is that funding does not enter the district until those students actually enroll. In our district this has led to overcrowding in certain areas and tough board decisions to delay a referendum ask until it was long overdue. Planning for future growth is a difficult sell to communities-- as we witnessed in the failed ISD 833 bond in August 2022. Meanwhile those delays further strain district resources as teachers and principals absorb the impact or transportation costs rise as school district boundaries shift in an effort to relieve overcrowding.

Public schools, like ours, are already at the mercy of all the development decisions in our many communities and are left to navigate the impact alone--at times further straining relationships with those same communities, something we experienced in our latest referendum campaign this fall. Ideally, school districts would at least be brought into the conversation earlier to help anticipate future needs so that local governments understand the whole picture. This could make them aware of the additional costs and opportunities for partnerships coming as we all work to serve all our residents.

Please share my comments with the rest of the committee. I appreciate the thoughtful process and look forward to seeing the recommendations for reform to the Met Council.

Best of luck.

Katie Hockert  
Board Director  
Stillwater Area Public Schools

Thank you for the listening session, perhaps some changes could be made to protect West Lakeland Township and Afton from losing their identity like what happened to Lake Elmo. and protect the fragile environmental resources that are left in the area.

MC created by legislature in 1967 to coordinate interdependent local governments in long term development and avoid sprawl. ( coordinate ... not dictate )

In 2003 the MC required the city of Lake Elmo to conform to their Regional Systems Plan and grow with sewer development.  
( **cities are not permitted to be unique , have their own identity or real choices with development patterns .** )

In 1990 I was at the MC and actually saw the long range plan along I 94 that showed a continuation of the Minneapolis /St Paul high density all along the corridor to the St Croix River . I was appalled at that and thought all cities should have the right to self determination and develop as the residents and land indicated.

The MC approach to residential development has been : aim to have relatively uniform high density throughout the metro area, because that type of development appears to utilize fixed costs. **No consideration to what people may want. No acknowledgement that some people may want to live on large lots, even if more expensive. No acknowledgement that the ideal could be a mixture of development densities.**

MC position has always been: build an expensive waste water treatment plant, because some cities want high density development, then they need people to generate the waste water even if nearby cities who do not want or need sewer. **It appears no consideration for the actual source of that waste water is{ the drinking water supply}.**

Many residents moved to Lake Elmo **from the Met Councils planned communities** in the area. Lake Elmo was a refuge and had a reputation for being an affordable city, that put residents first, plus being a leader in environmental protection . That is in the past. Now what has happened and why?

I and others knew trouble was brewing when The City of Lake Elmo staff went to MC in 2019, without the public's knowledge, and requested a huge increase in population over the MC population projections for the new comprehensive plan. Jake Riley and Todd Graham were forecast reviewers at the MC and stated most cities want population decreases, but, Lake Elmo requested an increase in population of well over 5,000 since the developers said they could do it. Lake Elmo is guilty of exasperating the problem. **Right NOW The city of Lake Elmo is close to or above the MC original population forecast for 2030 almost 6 years ahead of the approved plan.**

**It has become apparent that the frequent CompPlan amendments cast another concern. If a new resident moves to the city and are told a parcel would not be developed for 5 or 10 years then, for what ever reason a amendment to the plan**

**changes everything and a use is permitted years before it was scheduled . How can anyone trust any Plan if phases are permitted to be changed on a whim?**

The drinking water pollution issue has been documented. The city **knowingly** exceeded the DNR water allocations for a long time.

The Lake Elmo Environmental Committee was eliminated. They would have been an asset to helping the city with ideas to help conserve water .

Surface water issues have always been challenging and the VBWS is of utmost importance to the city.

Another CONCERN:

Lake Elmo Regional Park Reserve has been a positive asset in the community and a safe haven for people and wildlife for many years plus, is very well run by Washington County.

How many of you know or remember Site G ? also known as a garbage dump for the metro region could have been at the Regional Park? The residents of Lake Elmo voted to increase their taxes to fight this dump in the park. .Recycle and Preserve Parks was organized We were successful in getting that site eliminated. My husband was chair of the WC environmental committee that started the recycling program in Washington County.

Are you aware that the Lake Elmo Regional Park Reserve is planning extensive mountain biking trails all over the park rather than in limited areas? That intense activity will disrupt the eco system and wildlife habitat in the park.

Thank goodness for the DNR rules that prohibited clear cutting within so many feet of a lake, or we would have another scar on the landscape at the south east end of Lake Elmo. The city of Lake Elmo permitted clear cutting of the extensive woodlands in Tartan Park. That action displaced the abundant wildlife and many relocated to the Regional Park Reserve where the expansive new trails are scheduled to be built. The Regional Park Personnel were not aware of the extensive deforestation at Tartan Park.

The Comprehensive Plan states the Regional Park Reserve is primarily for passive uses.

A complete review needs to be done to protect this last precious environmental resource in the area.

In Conclusion it is obvious that Lake Elmo has serious concerns.

The Lake Elmo City Council workshop of Tuesday December 12 review proposals for 3 more high density developments of about 1200 units. That could easily be an additional 2000 to 3000 people .

Met Councils Original population projections for Lake Elmo were more realistic than those of the developers and city staff. Please readdress the population numbers in the comp plan.

#### A REMINDER

The Water Use Work group got appropriations ( HF 2304) from the state to study the safe drinking water issue and sustainability of surface and ground water resources.

- 1 Evaluate methods for conserving and recharging groundwater in the area
- 2 Convert water supplies that are groundwater dependent to total or partial supplies from surface water sources.
- 3 Reusing water, including water discharged from contaminated wells
- 4 Projects designed to increase groundwater recharge and
- 5 Other methods for reducing groundwater use.

Let them do the evaluation before proceeding with further developments in the city.

Susan Dunn

Lake Elmo, MN  
55042



12/14/23

Good afternoon my name is Stan Karwoski Wash Co. Commissioner

Current Vice Chair on our Board and serving my 7<sup>th</sup> Year as a Commissioner

Also, 16 Years in total serving on the Oakdale City Council and serving as Mayor.

23 years total since 2001 elected experience working with the Met Council

I come with testimony serving as a member of the MICA a ring county group (that includes Anoka County). I also serve on the AMC 7-County kitchen cabinet group.

Both groups working on a new MC governance structure and performance.

To date both groups have discussed many of the same priorities for change. I believe at this point the MICA group is a little further along in discussing and consensus building on change.

**COG (Council of Governance) MICA group - further along:**

1. *A majority of Metropolitan Council members shall be elected officials who are appointed from and by cities and counties. **No Direct Elect Concept support!***
2. ***Metropolitan cities** shall directly control the appointment process for city representatives to the Metropolitan Council.*
3. ***Each of the seven metropolitan counties** shall directly appoint their own representative to the Metropolitan Council.*
4. ***Terms of office** of any Metropolitan Council members shall be staggered. The Governor continues to appoint the Met Council Chair.*
5. *The New Metropolitan Council shall represent the entire region.*

6. *Counties are looking into a **larger 32 District Met Council** with “one” representative from each of the 7 metro Counties. The remaining districts will have local appointment control and with a priority that district boundaries do not cross county boundaries more than necessary - proportionality.*
7. *Reform goals – **members more accountable to constituents** and the Met Council Staff more accountable to elected representatives.*

Moving forward I urge you all the Reform Committee to listen to these two AMC & MICA groups and apply their input as a high priority!

I also urge you to use the insight of Commissioner Bigham serving on your Reform Committee and representing the county perspective.

Lastly, I urge you to call on MICA Executive Director Matt Massman as a great resource for collar county perspectives and also the entire region.

Thank you for your time.



# ***Citizen Advocates for Regional Transit***

***Universal Transit Mobility through Unified Transit  
Governance***

**1/2/2024**

## **Comments Prepared for the Task Force on Metropolitan Governance**

### **Transit: Essential Structural Changes Needed**

The work of the Task Force is tremendously important for the region and the state. But it's no secret that the greatest public frustration with the Met Council is due to the Southwest LRT project delays and huge increases in cost. It would be unfortunate if the governance issue was resolved but the transit issues that brought it to light continued to fester.

CART has studied this issue over many years and has identified several key structural issues with public transit legislation for the metropolitan area. Following are the top six structural issues that require immediate attention from the House and Senate Transportation Committees when the legislature next reconvenes:

**The first structural issue** for transit is, of course, appointment. As long as Council members serve at the pleasure of the Governor, one person ultimately controls everything Metro; and if the governor chooses, for example, not to lead on transit, not much happens. Serving merely at the pleasure of the governor, Council members have often seemed distant and unresponsive to public concerns.

An elected Met Council will eliminate this gubernatorial muffling and transfer leadership to the people directly affected; with this arrangement, the Council is far more likely to consistently care about and deliver a public transit system that works for the voters.

**The second structural issue** is the bifurcation of rail transit development between the counties which select the route and the Met Council that builds and operates the line.

Such a bifurcation in this massive undertaking is incredibly dangerous for effectiveness and accountability. Albeit in good faith, the line drawn by a county can easily overlook critical factors and issues for constructing and operating the line. These problems, nevertheless, will be found and need to be resolved, possibly taking a lot of time and money and result in lengthy

project delays and skyrocketing costs. That is what happened with both SWLRT and Bottineau (and may be seen again with the Riverview and Purple Lines).

This bifurcation must be eliminated. It is essential that the Legislature establish a single designer/builder/operator of the transit projects.

We believe the only entity with the necessary regional perspective, including urban growth and land use planning, regional service building and experience operating a major regional transit system is the Metropolitan Council. It's certainly not MnDot.

A related problem with the bifurcation is that each time a county sets out to draw the line for a transitway, a new set of consultants is hired and then let go a few years later; most of the knowledge acquired over several years of study walks out at the same time. There is little buildup of in-house expertise; much of the learning must be repeated each time. With one agency, the Met Council, responsible for developing all the transitways, it is much more likely that this knowledge and expertise would be retained and prevent repeated mistakes.

**The third structural problem is the lack of specific clarity and mandate for what metro public transit should be in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.**

Current legislative direction is broad, impressive and ignored:

*“...to provide, to the greatest feasible extent, a basic level of mobility for all people in the metropolitan area” and to “arrange to the greatest feasible extent for the provision of a comprehensive set of transit and paratransit services to meet the needs of all people in the metropolitan area”. (Sec. .473.371 MN Statutes) (emphasis added).*

Instead of a transit system to meet the needs of all people in the metropolitan area, the Met Council is still building a 1920's hub and spoke system around the two downtowns. In recent years, it has invested billions of dollars on transitways that mostly feed downtown Minneapolis. But 90% of the public seldom go downtown; and the Covid epidemic has shown that much of the office work traditionally located downtown can be done at home. Among the 90% not going downtown are a great many people who can't, shouldn't, or prefer not to drive; the transit needs of a vast majority of people are not being met.

Over the last eighty years, dozens of metropolitan centers have begun to evolve throughout the region; these need to be part of the regional transit system. A 21<sup>st</sup> Century metropolitan transit System should connect these centers and the legacy downtowns through a System of BRT and LRT routes. Any local area that is taxed for transit improvements should have transit modes appropriate for that area that bring regular transit service to those communities and connects them to a backbone network of LRT and BRT, which in turn makes the rest of the metropolitan areas accessible. The long-term objective of the System should be to enable anyone in such transit taxing district to reach any other part of the transit taxing district in a reasonable amount

of time. The Legislature should immediately establish this as both goal and mandate for transit investment going forward.

**The fourth structural problem is the lack of local government participation in and responsibility for “the last mile” - the route from your door to the transit station or bus stop and the route from the bus stop or transit station to your destination. Plans to improve access to transit should be a key part of the comprehensive plan.**

The public and its agencies must understand that a transit ride is from door-to-door, not station-to-station or bus stop-to-bus stop. Not all homes or destinations are going to be directly adjacent to a station or bus stop. The trek to or from a station or bus stop, can make or break the transit ride. This is especially so for people with disabilities, but realistically every transit rider is reluctant or unable to ride transit if the paths to and from transit are blocked by snow, ice, broken or missing pavement, pools of water, trash, obstacles, dangerous traffic, or crossings with no pedestrian protections, to name a few.

Local governments control most roads and walkways; they possess planning, zoning and other regulatory powers and can build and maintain walkways needed by transit riders. The last mile must receive attention comparable to the transitways themselves.

The Legislature should require the participation of each local government in analyzing the need for and characteristics of public transit within their jurisdiction, for both local and regional connections and both in-coming and out-going riders. This should be part of their comprehensive planning process, including the development of each municipality’s own database and analyses of their needs for public transit. Wherever the Metropolitan Council provides or intends to provide public transit, the stops should be identified for each municipality and the municipality should identify any obstacles to access by the public, measures needed to correct and enhance access and to maintain accessibility to these stops.

**The fifth structural problem is right-of-way acquisition.**

According to the report of the Legislative Auditor, 80% of the delays and escalating costs of SWLRT were due to failure to work out a suitable arrangement with the freight railroads. For Bottineau, this has essentially stopped the line and caused the Met Council to find a new route for a large portion of the Line. Ramsey County had the opportunity to acquire an unused rail corridor for the Riverview project but did nothing when the merger of the railroad gave it a unique opportunity to acquire the land at a very attractive cost.

At the present time, there are several railroad corridors that are no longer needed for railroad use, but which can be tremendously valuable for the metropolitan area as public trail and transit corridors. The Met Council must be tasked with identifying and acquiring these properties that have extraordinary public value for transit and trails.

It is apparent that the assignment of the railroad relationship to individual county rail authorities creates a divide and conquer advantage for the railroads and fails to deliver the metropolitan perspective when opportunities occur to negotiate and make decisions on future public use of these rail corridors and other railroad properties.

The duties of the county railroad authorities need to be transferred to the Met Council where it can be addressed more thoroughly in the context of the several metropolitan systems and the land use and development plans of the local governments. Counties and municipalities must have input to this activity.

**The sixth structural problem is adequate funding and progress reports.**

Legislature needs to set goals for the Council to accomplish within designated periods and must receive annual updates from the Council. The Legislature must also include multiple sources of funding for continued building out of a 21<sup>st</sup> Century regional transit system, with or without federal money.

-----

James Schoettler  
Citizen Advocates for Regional Transit (CART)  
[REDACTED]  
St Paul MN 55116

Metropolitan Task Force testimony, January 5, 2023

\*\*\*\*\*

My personal experience with the Metropolitan Council is limited to the placement of a stop for the new E Line Bus Rapid Transit route. I will briefly summarize my interactions with the council regarding the bus stop siting, and then, based on this experience, I will present my impressions about the Metropolitan Council as it is currently constituted.

My condo association and I opposed the placement of a new E line bus stop adjacent to our driveway at the foot of the Hennepin Bridge on First Avenue NE. This bus stop, that will also serve four other bus routes, will be upstream from our driveway and, when a bus is at the stop, will make it much more difficult to judge when to cross First Avenue in order to make a left turn at Main Street which is just a short distance from our driveway. We pointed out the potential for either a T-bone crash or a blockage of the bus at the stop if a resident misjudges when to make their move into traffic from behind the bus. I personally drove all of the existing Metro Transit bus rapid transit routes and could not find a stop sited next to a driveway with the same rush hour traffic volumes and speed, the same large number of routes serviced at the stop, and the same difficult maneuver required by drivers exiting the adjacent driveway. Based on my professional experience teaching collegiate modeling and simulation courses, I told Metro Transit that it would be necessary to perform a detailed traffic simulation in order to understand this problem. To the best of my knowledge this analysis was never performed and the Metropolitan Council approved the siting of the bus stop next to our driveway. For more details you can consult my emails which are appended to the electronic version of my testimony.

As a result of my experience, I have three conclusions regarding the Metropolitan Council as it is currently constituted:

- 1) Members of the Metropolitan Council are not qualified to monitor the complex development projects undertaken by the council. They do not ask difficult and probing questions of staff members when they make presentations. In fact, they don't ask many questions at all and simply rubber stamp staff recommendations. They appear to be completely dependent on staff to guide these complicated engineering projects.

- 2) Members of the Metropolitan Council do not engage with the members of the public that they represent. In the case of the bus

stop siting that I described, the Transportation Subcommittee suspended public comment at the meeting where they gave final approval to the location of all of the E Line bus stops. This was done even though members of the public, including our city council member, were present and had prepared testimony.

3)The decision making process of the Metropolitan Council is opaque. While staff members do hold public comment sessions and take copious notes, the detailed steps that are taken to reach a final recommendation are never made clear. Any internal studies or external expert analysis is not made publicly available.

Finally, I would like to offer pros and cons regarding the proposal to elect instead of appoint members of the Metropolitan Council.

There are several advantages to electing the members. Assuming that they want to be re-elected, they would, of necessity, become more accessible. I also believe that they would be more willing to engage the staff in more detailed and probing discussions instead of simply praising them as contributors to the team, as now appears to be the case. Because members would be beholden to the public, electing instead of appointing them also has the potential to make the decision making processes less opaque and to make internal documents available to the public.

However, electing the members of the Metropolitan Council does not solve all of the problems that I experienced. Most importantly, it does not guarantee that members will have the expertise necessary to critically evaluate and monitor the complicated projects that the Metropolitan Council undertakes. Electing members with agendas that are contrary to the stated goals of the Metropolitan Council could also slow progress and lead to dysfunction. I encourage you to explore the history of the Minneapolis Park Board for examples of what happens when elected members have disruptive personal agendas.

Thank you for the opportunity to address the Metropolitan Governance Task Force.

Gary W. Meyer

[REDACTED]  
Minneapolis, MN 55413  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]



\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\* correspondence regarding siting of E Line bus  
stop \*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\* email to Hennepin County Commissioner, sent July  
14, 2023 \*\*\*\*\*

I am writing to express my unhappiness with how Hennepin County, the Metropolitan Council, and MetroTransit have handled the decision to place an E Line bus stop at 1st Ave NE and 2nd St NE. Residents at the Village Lofts and Village Brownstones have expressed safety concerns about the placement of the stop at this location, the Hennepin County engineer and the MetroTransit planner incorrectly justify the location with unfounded comparisons to existing bus stops, and the Metropolitan Council rubber stamps the design without asking any serious questions. I have appended all of my correspondence with them so that you can better understand my frustration with the process.

As my representative on the Hennepin County Board of Commissioners I am asking you to request a serious safety analysis of this proposed E Line stop. We deserve better oversight of this and all other MetroTransit projects.

Sincerely,

Gary W. Meyer

██  
Minneapolis, MN 55413

██  
██

\*\*\*\*\* Station design comments, submitted July 9,  
2023 \*\*\*\*\*

I do not believe that either Metro Transit or Hennepin County has adequately investigated the safety concerns that have been raised about the placement of an E Line bus stop at 1st Avenue NE and 2nd St NE. In particular, the probability of a potentially fatal T-bone crash between oncoming traffic and a car exiting the adjacent driveway while obscured by a bus at the stop has not been evaluated. Neither the Metro Transit planner or the Hennepin

County engineer demonstrated that they understood the complexities of exiting this driveway in order to make a left turn at Main Street when they met recently (June 9, 2023) with residents of the Village Lofts and Village Brownstones who use the driveway to access their homes. No data or traffic simulation studies have been presented to the residents in spite of several requests for this work to be done (see my previous submissions below). This research has not been completed even though the operations of the E line and other bus lines that use the proposed platform could be disrupted by exiting drivers "balking" in the bus lane and blocking the bus when they discover a car coming from behind the bus and they abort their planned movement across 1st Avenue to make a left hand turn at Main Street.

Both the Metro Transit planner and the Hennepin County engineer assigned to this project have attempted to justify this placement with an incorrect claim that it is similar to other bus stops in the Metro Transit system. In the Spring of 2022 I personally visited all Bus Rapid Transit stops with an adjacent downstream driveway (see previous submission below) and I determined that none of them have the set of characteristics that make the proposed stop potentially dangerous. The stop's unique group of properties are as follows: 1) serves three bus lines (4, 11, and 61) in addition of the E line, 2) sees traffic surges during morning rush hours and before evening events, 3) incorporates a dedicated bike lane, 4) is located immediately upstream from an active driveway, 5) is positioned very close to a downstream cross-street that is difficult to safely reach from the driveway in order to make a left hand turn. After the meeting at Kramarczuk's on April 16, 2022 where he first presented this list of stops as proof that the proposed stop would work, the Metro Transit planner thanked me for providing the list (which he apparently copied) in my April 8 E line comment submission (see below) even though I claimed then (and still do) that there is no existing Metro Transit stop that can be used to justify the proposed stop. I challenge the Metro Transit planner to provide a written stop by stop comparison between the proposed stop and those he claims are similar.

This stop placement controversy is analogous to how, prior to the construction of the Southwest Light Rail, concerns expressed by affected residents were handled: people who lived in the area and were intimately familiar with the facts on the ground attempted to tell Metro Transit that what they wanted to do wouldn't work, Metro Transit staff labelled their concerns as simply NIMBY, and Metro Transit staff went forward with no resistance or tough questions from the Metropolitan Council. As evidence of how poorly

Metropolitan Council Members represent the public interest in supervising these public works projects, the chair of the transportation subcommittee suspended all public comment prior to the meeting (June 13, 2022) in which the E line was approved even though members of the public were present to testify! During that meeting only one question was asked by a council member that was related to the stop in question even though significant concerns were submitted in writing by those affected (see mine below). The question asked was (roughly) "How fast will the traffic travel on 1st Avenue after construction?" to which the Metro Transit planner responded (roughly) "I don't know, that's a Hennepin County issue." No follow up question was asked after this response. Why do you think some of us remain upset about the placement of this stop and the quality of the representation we receive on the Metropolitan Council?

Sincerely,

Gary W. Meyer

██  
Minneapolis, MN 55413

████████████████████  
████████████████████

\*\*\*\*\* Transportaion subcommittee comments, submitted May 23, 2022 \*\*\*\*\*

I am writing to express my concern regarding the proposed placement of an E Line bus stop at 1st Avenue NE and 2nd St NE. I do not believe that the Metro Transit planning staff has presented sufficient evidence to demonstrate that this location is both safe and functional for drivers who use this corridor and for residents who live nearby. I am asking you at your meeting this afternoon (May 23) to defer the decision for this E Line bus stop placement until the necessary traffic simulation studies are performed and made publicly available.

The only evidence offered as to the safety of this placement location is that it is similar to other BRT and regular Metro Transit stops currently in the system (discussion notes provided at April 16, 2022 meeting held at Kramarczuk's, 215 E. Hennepin). I have personally visited each of the comparable stops listed by the planning staff, and NONE of them have all or even most of the characteristics of the 1st Avenue NE and 2nd St NE location.

Here is a list of the things that make this proposed siting unique:

- 1) Located at the foot of the Hennepin Bridge, a natural traffic bottleneck.
- 2) Positioned where there is a traffic surge into the city during morning rush hour and before evening events.
- 3) Is being added to this corridor at the same time that existing traffic lanes are being eliminated.
- 4) Serves multiple bus lines (4, 6, 11, and 61) in addition to the E Line.
- 5) Incorporates a dedicated bike lane.
- 6) Located immediately upstream from an active driveway that serves a large condo and townhome complex (Village Lofts and Village Brownstones).

I pointed out these issues in the comments that I submitted to the E Line website prior to the meeting at Kramarczuk's (see attached document). In these comments I asked for traffic simulation studies to be performed prior to making a final decision about placing an E Line stop at this location. To the best of my knowledge these traffic simulation studies have not been done and/or made publicly available.

While it is easy to dismiss the concerns of those of us who live near the proposed stop as simply Not In My BackYard (NIMBY), the fact is that many of us have had personal experience with the complexities of this location for many years (personally, for 15 years). One hopes that Metro Transit and the Metropolitan Council are at least somewhat chastened by their Southwest Light Rail experience where on the ground evidence provided by local residents was apparently ignored during the planning process. For the sake of those of us who will be personally affected for many years by this bus stop placement decision, I hope that you will not make the same mistake this time.

Sincerely,

Gary W. Meyer



Minneapolis, MN 55413

████████████████████

████████████████████

\*\*\*\*\* Original E Line comments, submitted April 8, 2022 \*\*\*\*\*

I am a resident at the Village Lofts Condominiums, and I am writing to express my concern regarding the proposed E Line bus stop on First Avenue NE at 2nd St NE and the suggested repositioning of the 4, 11, 61, 141, and 824 bus stops to this same location. I do not believe that Metro Transit has presented sufficient evidence concerning the safety and time delay impacts that this proposal will have on the Village Lofts and Village Brownstones residents who use the driveway west of this location to merge with traffic on First Avenue NE. In addition, my own inspection of existing A Line and C Line bus stops indicates that Metro Transit has very limited experience with designing Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) stops upstream from heavily used driveways, and has never designed a BRT bus stop (at least for the A and C Lines) that involves the complexities of the proposed stop at First Avenue NE and 2nd St NE adjacent to our residences' driveway.

After taking a couple of afternoons to follow both the A and C Lines in my personal vehicle, I could only identify three stops (out of 80 stops total in each direction) that were immediately upstream from a heavily used driveway. The stops with this characteristic are: 7th Street & Hennepin (northbound C Line), Penn & Golden Valley (southbound C Line), and Ford & Finn (northbound A Line). Of these three, only the northbound A Line Ford & Finn stop is located on a street (Ford Parkway) that carries a volume of traffic similar to what exists on First Avenue NE (interestingly, the Ford & Finn location is also not far from a bridge over the Mississippi). The driveway located next to this stop services a small shopping center containing a Chipotle, a small Target, and a Starbucks. When the A Line bus is stopped at this location, observation of oncoming traffic is obscured for those exiting the shopping center and merging safely onto Ford Parkway is difficult until the bus departs. Depending on the level of activity, a car or two can back up into the parking lot from the driveway while the bus is stationary.

While waiting for a single A Line bus to disembark and board new passengers is not a major inconvenience for the occasional patron of this shopping center on Ford Parkway, there are three

significant differences between this A Line stop and the bus stop proposed on First Avenue NE:

1. The three additional bus lines (23, 46, and 74) that share the Ford & Finn stop with the A Line bus do not use the same platform as the A Line bus. In fact, a separate cut out area has been created for them upstream from the A Line platform. That means that they do not stick out into traffic and obscure the driver's view of traffic from the shopping center driveway. Therefore, people exiting the shopping center only have to deal with the A Line bus. That is not true for the proposed First Avenue NE stop where residents regularly exiting from our driveway will have to contend with the 4, 11, 61, 141, and 824 buses in addition to the A Line bus.

2. There is not a bicycle lane through the middle of the Ford & Finn stop (as there will be for the proposed First Avenue NE stop), and there isn't a dedicated bicycle lane on Ford Parkway. A driver exiting the shopping center near the Ford & Finn stop does not have to deal with bicycle traffic travelling along a separate pathway in addition to automobile traffic and A Line buses on Ford Parkway. The same is not true for the proposed First Avenue NE stop where Village Lofts and Brownstones homeowners regularly exiting from their driveway will have to attend to both automobile traffic on First Avenue and bicycle traffic on a dedicated lane that runs adjacent to the bus stop structures.

3. Drivers merging from the driveway downstream from the Ford & Finn bus stop are entering two lanes of traffic and have a reasonable distance to get into the sheltered left hand turn lane at Cleveland Avenue S. For the proposed First Avenue NE stop, residents exiting our driveway are confronted with three lanes of traffic and getting into the far left lane to make a left turn at NE Main Street requires a gap in traffic across all three lanes. Even without the bus stop, merging into traffic from our driveway is more complicated that it is near the Ford Parkway bus stop.

Given that so few A and C Line bus stops involve an active downstream driveway, I expect Metro Transit to justify its current decision to put an E Line stop on First Avenue NE with some data driven analysis. Given the matter of fact manner in which Metro Transit presented its plan, one would think that such stops are commonplace in its system. The reality turns out to be quite different, and the scarcity of similar BRT stops justifies residents' concerns that what is being proposed is unusual and

potentially dangerous. Here are a couple of examples of analyses that would help residents determine the impact of the proposal on them:

\* How do the proposed bus stop structures impact the field of view for a driver attempting to merge onto First Avenue NE from the Village Lofts' and Brownstones' driveway? What happens to the field of view when a bus is at the bus stop? This is a relatively simple diagram to create using a two dimensional top view of the proposed bus stop. Given the computer tools available today, it should also be easy to produce a three dimensional view of the scene from the point of view of the driver. This is basic information that should be made publicly available before any final decision is made. It is commonplace today to include such renderings in public architectural or landscape presentations.

\* What is the expected average delay due to traffic and bus activity for a driver attempting to merge onto First Avenue NE from our driveway? How many cars could potentially queue up in our driveway during peak hours of activity? I am not trained as a traffic engineer, but my professional life has made me aware of modeling and simulation tools that are available to answer such questions. If you determine the appropriate probability distributions for traffic, bicycle, bus, and driveway activity (this can easily be done by counting cars, bicycles, and buses over a fixed period of time), you can set up randomized computer simulations that will give you the required answers. These are also results that should be available before any final decision is made.

In summary, I do not believe that Metro Transit has done the analysis and studies necessary to quantify the effects of the proposed First Avenue NE bus stop on the daily lives and safety of the Village Lofts and Brownstone homeowners, and they do not have practical experience with BRT stops of equivalent complexity to simply assume that there will not be high accident frequency or inordinate time delays for the people who live in these communities. There are 115 separate condominiums and townhomes that share the driveway downstream from the proposed bus stop -- probably the equivalent of an entire subdivision of standalone single family homes. By choosing to live in high density housing we already contribute to the environmental goals that many of us share with advocates of mass transit and human powered vehicles. We deserve a more complete answer from Metro Transit to our legitimate concerns regarding the proposed E Line First Avenue NE bus stop.

Sincerely,

Gary W. Meyer

[REDACTED]  
Minneapolis, MN 55413  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]



January 4, 2024

To: Members of the Metropolitan Governance Task Force

From: Paul Mandell, [REDACTED] Inver Grove Hts., MN 55076

RE: THOUGHTS REGARDING THE METROPOLITAN COUNCIL

#### Membership and Operations

I had meant to testify at one of your December meetings by changes to my work schedule prevented me from making it at the last minute. I did sit in on much of your January 3 meeting, and that helped me clarify some thoughts, so I am submitting what might be a bit lengthy document for your consideration and would ask that it be entered into the record.

I have recently retired for the second time from my job at the Capitol after over thirty-five years. I have also been involved politically in my free time over the years, both on a partisan level and in many non-partisan and civic areas, including three terms on my local school board. In that time, I have applied more than twice to serve on the Metropolitan Council, both for a member position and on various committees, but never with any success.

While I am undecided about the best way to select Council Members, I do believe that if through elections, no more than half to two-thirds of the members should be directly elected. I am uncertain about how one would run for such a position: as to would there be certain related qualifications beyond just age, For example. As a city and environmental planner, I have always thought iA would be well qualified for such a role, but I wonder if such a position might require at least something more than just interest in service? I would hope that money alone or who one knows would not be allowed to determine winners as so often is the case elsewhere. I f you recommend elections, I would encourage you to consider public financing and spending limits to avoid conflicts of interest.

With that said, I feel very strongly that neither elected or appointed positions should automatically go to current County Board members or City Council members due simply to their office. There is already far too often a general perception that too many of Met Council decisions are internally wired in favor of elected leaders, influential governmental bodies or developers. All too often I hear friends and the public talk about how little they know about what their county board or commissioners do, or complaining about why they have such a large rate of compensation, at least compared to municipal officials. Regarding the latter, I regularly hear complaints about lack of accountability or representation, and I see a correlation between these concerns and the low level of public participation in elections, often hovering below twenty percent of the electorate. I also firmly believe that selecting such public officials could contribute to increased parochialism that could be detrimental to the regional purposes for the Council.

I so apologize if any of what I have said might be taken personally; that was certainly not my intention, but based on concerns should your recommendations reinforce weaknesses of the past or possible misguided directions in the future. I have a real appreciation for the challenging task you have all been charged with- it is both an enormous job and critically important to the health and welfare of both our metro area and the state.

Before closing, allow me to add that one of the most important things you might accomplish would be to dramatically improve the level of both accountability and transparency for the work of the Metropolitan Council, an organization I do fully believe in based on my studies leading to a Master's Degree and experience in other metropolitan areas. For too long, I have rarely met, seen, or heard for past Council members, and might be hard pressed to name more than one from the past twenty years, and I consider myself more involved civically than the average member of the public. The one exception, who had been a former member of the legislature, was often seen participating in public hearings or meetings of not just Council committee meetings, but local city meetings and even a variety of local, non-profit events. I even remember receiving a written update from that Council member during his 2018-22 term.

Given the responsibilities of the Council, I would hope that your work might at least result in greater service by means of communication with the public, not just via posted electronic news on some website but actual outreach to all the public via things like newsletters and or actual town meetings required of all Council members, supported with the necessary infrastructure and funding for such open communication with those there members are supposed to represent..

Thank you for your consideration and for listening. Good luck in your work on this worthy cause.

January 5, 2024

Metropolitan Governance Task Force listening session

Rosanne Halloran

Resident of Cedar-Isles-Dean Neighborhood since 1999

CIDNA Board Member 2012-2023

Thank you to the members of the task force for accepting the daunting task of reviewing the structure and mandate of the Met Council and submitting reform suggestions to the legislature.

Also daunting is the fact that the Metropolitan Council oversees 5 regional issues that overwhelmingly define the quality of life and livability for those who live and work within the 7-county metro area.

With that in mind, the following two statements are found on the **What We Do** page of the Metropolitan Council's website:

*Our governing body, the 17-member Metropolitan Council, plays a key convening role, bringing together communities to develop policies and a shared vision and direction for the region.*

*Our **Public Engagement Plan (updated 2015)** establishes principles and processes for public engagement to ground Met Council decisions in the needs of community stakeholders and to engage people in the decision-making process.*

The Public Engagement Plan expands on the following governing principles that the council and staff aim to keep front and center as they conduct their work:

1. Equity
2. Respect
3. Transparency
4. Relevance
5. Accountability
6. Collaboration
7. Inclusion
8. Cultural Competence

There is also a 2022 Transportation addendum to the plan that may have been drawn up by the council to address the public outcry about the project problems that resulted from the council's failure to follow their governing principles in the SWLRT project. Unfortunately, by 2022 it was considered too late, and/or there was a lack of will, to be accountable to the public for project problems that had been predicted and expressed by the public during early project planning hearings. As predictions came true during construction, the council lost both its credibility and the people's trust.

I do not conclude that the estrangement between the public and the council was due solely to their incompetence or irresponsibility. The council's work is vast and complex, perhaps exceeding what can be successfully overseen by the current structure. It is the essential work of the task force to investigate that possibility.

Looking ahead, and considering what we know at this point in the task force's review, I believe that the Met Council members should be elected rather than appointed by the Governor. The campaign process will bring the council members and their work into the light of day, providing them the opportunity to gain the support and trust of the people they serve.

May the reform suggestions drawn up by the task force contribute to the creation of a metropolitan planning structure that is designed and equipped to tackle the evolving metro area challenges and opportunities ahead.

Thank you.

# **Presentation to the Metropolitan Governance Task Force**

**Ted Kolderie -- January 5, 2024**

Today it's hard to believe there was a time when the main item on the public agenda was governance . . . the redesign, mostly of the policy side of cities, counties, the state; the Legislature itself. The creation of the Metropolitan Council was the design of a new institution, of regional governance.

Over time it has changed; been changed. *As you rethink the question it is good to go back to the original concept of what it was intended to be, and do.*

We'll find even the name is significant. We talk about city government, county government, state government. Significantly, for the metropolitan level we say, "Metropolitan Council".

I was able to follow the discussion and decisions. In the early years, from the editorial page of the Minneapolis Star and Tribune. In 1966, in Washington as a Congressional Fellow in the vice president's Capitol office, I followed the federal legislation. Later, with the Citizens League, the early implementation of the new regional arrangement.

Some recollections from those years might be helpful.

ooo

Clearly a new kind of 'city' had appeared; a real city, larger than the legal city. Individually Minneapolis and Saint Paul were the 27th and 43rd largest cities in America; minor-league. As a region we could be the 15th largest; major league.

The driver for the creation of a council for the region was the ground-water contamination problem that appeared in 1959. Far too many people were trying at the same time to bury wastewater in, and draw drinking water from, the back yard.

Municipalities could and did build the central water supply. But state action was needed for action on sewage collection, treatment and disposal. To make that decision the Legislature needed local agreement on what was wanted.

Session after session legislative action was frustrated by the absence of agreement within the region. *What finally came clear was that the Legislature first needed to give us an entity within which we could develop the politically valid agreement legislators require in order to act.*

After the failure of the 1965 session a serious local discussion began about what that entity should be, and do. The governance questions were clear: Who, what, was to be represented? How would its members be selected? And, what was to be its scope of authority?

The answers emerged for the 1967 session.

- o It should be a local body, representing people. The idea of a 'council of governments' was considered, but did not find favor; conspicuously, not among suburban mayors.

- o The consensus was for direct election, with the clear understanding that *you are an 'elected official' only when elected to the seat in which you are voting.*

- o The Legislature's earlier structure of representation -- three members each from Minneapolis and Saint Paul and a chair from outside the region appointed by the governor -- obviously could not be continued.

- o Finally, the new state-created local body was to deal only with problems beyond the capacity of local government.

This worked. The '67 session accepted a bipartisan bill for a council with 14 districts (Senate districts combined by twos). Legislators from the Twin Cities area favored direct election roughly 2-1, but the amendments proposed by Representative Sabo and Senator Anderson failed; narrowly: Members of the Council would be appointed by the governor.

It was, the attorney general carefully said, neither purely a state entity nor purely a local entity but something intermediate between the two, possessing some of the characteristics of each.

ooo

The Council was charged, as adviser to the Legislature, to return in '69 with its proposal for a sewerage system.

It did. The central cities proposed an extension of their system, contracting with the suburbs. The council proposed their sanitary district be taken into regional ownership; the plant to remain downstream at Pig's Eye. Legislators asked dissenters: "Did you get a fair hearing?" Minneapolis allowed it had. That was enough.

The Legislature did not accept the Council's proposal that it should itself build and operate the system. Instead, it created a waste control commission separate from but subordinate to the Council.

Now consider the governance arrangement at this point.

The Council was put in an essentially policy role; not an operator of regional systems. There was no consolidated regional administration. Over the years special districts had been created as regional systems needed to be built; for airports and transit, for example; and there was a state agency, the highway department, building the region's major roads. The Legislature was now adding the sanitary district, another sub-contractor, to the operating side of this regional government.

The essential concept comes clear if you think about the construction of a major building:

Sub-contractors put up the structure; design and install its plumbing, electrical, internal transportation, heating-and-ventilating systems. *But there is also an architect and general contractor.* There was no counterpart in the region in 1967. The Council was created to play that role; to make the overall plan and to give direction and coordination to the 'sub-contractors'.

Note that in this role the Council could also plan for and help to coordinate *non-governmental* systems of regional scope -- as it did, later, with the proposal by Hennepin County for a new public medical center.

(In this important case traditional Council thinking was reversed. The Council had believed its influence lay in approval of a final plan. That is too late. *To be influential, tell the operating agency up front and clearly the few things it must and must not do.* Comply, and your plan will get approval. Fail, and it will not. The county complied.)

ooo

National policy, concurrently, was moving differently with respect to regional governance.

The Johnson administration had bought into the 'council of governments' idea. Regional councils were to be created, made up of sitting officials of the local units. Each would develop a regional plan. It would review local applications for federal aid to ensure conformity to the plan. From this process, coherent regional development would proceed.

Congressman Fraser had been following the Minnesota discussion. On final passage he got the bill amended to say, ". . . except as otherwise provided by state law". That cleared the way for our legislature to act.



*In operation through the 1970s the COG idea proved not a success.* The Commission on Intergovernmental Relations found many to be 'paper mills', seldom if ever finding an application not to approve. The whole scheme was taken down by the administration that took office in 1981.

Another kind of national influence *did* intervene in Minnesota; one never much recognized. The National Association of Counties, Bernie Hillenbrand's creation, did not approve of Minnesota's metropolitan approach. He wanted counties to play the central role. Hillenbrand sent Jim Shipman to Minnesota, to put a stop to the expansion of metropolitan arrangements. His influence is visible in the subsequent evolution of the regional programs here.

ooo

Inevitably, pressure developed for 'the Council' to operate the regional programs. Governments do want to 'run things'. In the 1994 legislation key separate-but-subordinate commissions were abolished; the Council became an operating body.

This has most significantly affected transportation, the most complex of all urban physical systems . . . with public vehicles and private vehicles, state agencies and local agencies, and differing concepts of 'transit'.

After initially buying the bus company, the Metropolitan Transit Commission in 1971 made clear it would propose a rail system. The Council quickly got itself a transit plan: It looked instead to bus on busway. The MTC declined to be guided by that; appealed to the Legislature. Legislators spent two sessions looking at personal rapid transit; never did resolve the dispute.

With the abolition of the MTC in 1994 the effort at rail transit was taken up by the counties. County government shaped the system plan for transit. The Council, holding now the operating responsibility for transit, got to build and run it. In the end the Council chair cut a deal with the counties: Some of each.

*The original concept of governance, of system-planning and system-operation, had been turned upside down.*

ooo

Finally, a quick suggestion as to representation and membership that could help re-establish the Council as a local entity.

There is an idea, not seriously advanced of course when the argument was between direct-election and governor-appointment, that you might consider, should it prove necessary to find an alternative to direct election.

*This is to return the districting to Senate districts combined by twos, and have the six legislators in each district select the person who will represent that district on the Metropolitan Council.*

Should this be ruled constitutionally beyond legislative authority, the six legislators would recommend candidates to the governor for appointment.

JAN 5, 2024 MGTf TESTIMONY

Richard Adair [REDACTED]; Barry Schade [REDACTED], Mpls

To elect, or not to elect, that is the question. Better to have an elected council directly accountable to voters, or an appointed council that can concentrate on long range planning while at arm's length from today's issues? I'm asking you to take the long view.

Some questions: How did people living here 130 years ago have the foresight to keep the shorelines of city lakes public? Would an elected Council make such a decision in today's complex world?

And who does an elected council represent, really? Only 24.5% of the voting-age population participated in the recent Minneapolis election. Who will speak for the other three quarters? Many are low-income, transit-dependent, in survival mode, and just don't have time to vote.

So, why not have an all-elected council, where voters would know who is representing them, and could replace them at will?

**Because**, let's not kid ourselves: most voters don't want to inconvenience themselves for the benefit of people living here in the distant future. How's the fight going against global warming?

**Because**, elections don't always reflect the will of the people. Portland, Oregon is a very transit-friendly place, but people elected to their Metro

Council are routinely anti-transit according to its chair. People who own cars generally don't use transit, don't understand transit, don't want to pay for transit. (But they will contribute to your election fund.)

**Because**, council elections will always be down-ballot, low participation affairs, vulnerable to highjacking by small groups. Members of the White Bear Lake city council were voted out after they supported a BRT line. After all, **the goal is to increase public accountability, not to give small groups the power to block a greater good such as an efficient multimodal transit system.**

So, I can think of two ways to solve these problems:

**Option 1. Create a hybrid council with both elected and appointed members.** For every two elected members, a group of officials from the same area could appoint a trusted community figure to focus on long-range planning.

**Option 2. Keep the council appointed but ask a panel of local elected officials to make the appointments instead of the governor.**

More accountability, because local officials are tuned in to their constituents, who do know their phone numbers. Better long-term results, because council members could focus on planning rather than re-election. This is Rep. Koznick's plan, and it has the important advantage that **it can get bipartisan support.** A bipartisan Council would help the people in greater Minnesota think of the metro area as theirs, too. Let's go for what we can get done in a bipartisan way.

Metropolitan Governance Task Force - 1/5/24

As a homeowner and resident of Minneapolis' North Loop, it is extremely evident to me that the Met Council as it stands is broken. When I think of one person (the governor) appointing a body to make decisions on behalf of the residents and taxpayers, it makes me think of the fiefdoms of northern Europe that my ancestors fled for a better life here in the U.S.

Without accountability to the communities they serve, Met Councilmembers are free to destroy neighborhoods, wastefully spend our hard-earned tax dollars, and push pet projects that are not justified.

Like other leaders in our Democracy the members of the Met Council should be elected by those they serve. There is a reason we the citizens elect city, state, federal, and other leaders. It keeps them accountable to us.

As is evident by the southwest light rail extension, the Met Council disregards those who know their communities best. When concerns about the route and project were brought up by community members the Met Council blatantly disregarded them and now, we taxpayers are stuck footing the bill. \$2.74 billion, \$480 per Minnesota resident spent because the Met Council wouldn't listen.

We continue to see their lack of concern for the residents impacted by their authoritarian decisions. The nearly 20-year-old plan of a blue line Light Rail extension to Brooklyn Park has plowed forward with many different iterations that deviate far from the initial plan. 20 years ago, we did not have Smartphones, Ridesharing apps, Electric Cars, Electric Busses, scooters, the list goes on, yet the Met Council refuses to explore all options and maintains the antiquated plan for expensive light rail.

When they didn't initially listen to residents and chose the Lyn Park route, they nearly destroyed a thriving diverse community. When that plan fell apart, they moved to West Broadway and plan to demolish 24 buildings: 14 BIPOC Small Businesses and 10 Homes. In my community of the North Loop, they are planning on running light rail trains as close as 15 feet from our bedroom windows. Completely disregarding our privacy and the risk of damage to our 100-year-old historic building. The Met Council has not learned.

What is clearly evident is that the Met Council as it stands cares about nothing other than completing a project, continually dismissing residents' concerns and wastefully throwing our hard-earned money at the problems their lack of accountability continues to create. They do not care for the wellbeing of the neighborhoods their decisions affect.

While I understand that this Task Force does not have direct input on current and future projects, I do know that many of the members who sit before me and guests here today have the capability to keep our leaders accountable. The damage that can be caused by unaccountable transit decisions is evident. Southwest Light Rail, Rondo; We see these in the news regularly.

For historical reference I bring up the once planned I-335 interstate connection. In 1964 the US Department of Transportation decided to approve an interstate connection through what are now the thriving and vibrant neighborhoods of the North Loop and Northeast. This was a decision made without community input and by those with no accountability to the residents.

The project moved forward with purchasing land and demolishing houses. Luckily for us, the public outcry about the destruction of these neighborhoods persuaded Senator Mondale, Representative Fraser, and the Minneapolis City Council to withdraw support for the project. They were all accountable to residents, the Met Council as it stands is not.

Had that interstate been built, the Historic former Lavoris Mouthwash factory that I have called home for the past 10 years and many other buildings would have been destroyed. The vibrant, diverse, and energized neighborhoods we all enjoy would not exist today had that project succeeded.

It is with this precedent that we as residents, homeowners, taxpayers, and community members request that the accountability start now, the proposed Blue Line Light Rail extension in its current iteration be halted, and that new innovative and flexible solutions like electric bus rapid transit be explored. Our communities, residents, and state deserve this.

And most importantly the Met Council must be accountable to us. Not the governor. Not one singular person. ALL of us.

Respectfully,

Matthew Bruns

████████████████████  
Minneapolis, MN 55401

████████████████████

To be read into record during 1/5/24 Public Engagement Meeting

Metropolitan Governance Task Force:

One thing that irked me during the many Met Council meetings and engagement was questions or clarifications were to be addressed at the end or written on post it notes. This does not lead to public understanding of the content. I realize, they needed to get through all of their slides and information. They need to value the public's concerns and questions. I would forget the context of my question by the end of the presentation. They need a better way to follow-up with unanswered questions. Questions from the public are just as important as the presentation and getting through all the slides. Make presentations more understandable in simple terms. Explain acronyms when they are first used. Visual representations of routes were hard to read, interpret, and comprehend. The visual keys and color of routes were micro sized, too!

Lastly, I wonder where all those unanswered post-it notes are!

Met Council needs to greatly improve public presentations and communications.

Anonymous Testifier

North Side Resident

\*Received via an email sent to Rep. Hornstein on 1/4/24 with a request to be anonymous\*

To: Chair Hornstein & Members of the House Transportation Committee  
From: Sierra Club North Star Chapter  
Date: March 13, 2023  
Re: **HF2092, Comparison of Met Council to Governance of Greater MN Transit**

Many have noted how unusual the Met Council is compared to national standards. It is also unusual within Minnesota. Below is a summary of who is accountable for governing transit in six Greater MN regions that provide fixed route transit service: Duluth, Rochester, Saint Cloud, Winona, Mankato and Moorhead. The summary shows a variety of governing models which include elected officials, appointed members, or both. Some have advisory bodies. Many are multi-jurisdictional, including elected officials from multiple cities, even across state lines.

But all six systems have two qualities in common:

1. In none of these governing models are all of the board members appointed members and also all appointed by the same person.
2. None of the elected officials or appointees are chosen based on statewide election results. In all of these models, those in charge are accountable only to local voters.

That the Twin Cities Metro Area is bigger is not an excuse for governance to fail to follow similar and normal democratic principles. Large metros across the nation have figured this out.

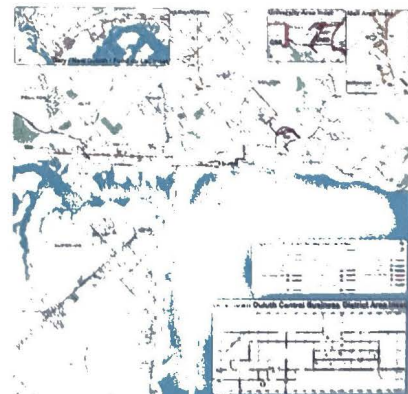
Sierra Club is not ready today to endorse the specific alternative proposed in HF2092. We should also explore other governance models including separating transit from other Met Council functions. Nationwide, many regions don't place the management of transit service under the same entity as an MPO or regulatory body like the Met Council.

The one unacceptable model is the status quo, which diminishes and even endangers vital transit service. Please consider multiple options to bring local accountability to Metro Transit.

## **Duluth Transit Authority**

### Board of Directors

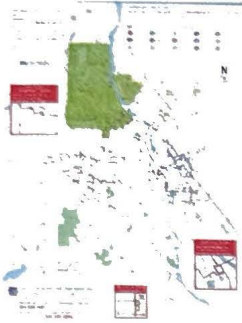
All Board of Directors members must be residents of Duluth with the exception of one representative for the City of Superior. The Board consists of nine members; five of which represent the five City Council districts, one representative from the City of Superior, and three representing the City of Duluth At-Large. Each member may serve two consecutive three year terms on the Board of Directors.





## Saint Cloud Metro Bus

### Metropolitan Transit Commission



The Metro Bus Board of Commissioners is made up of five members:

Two members represent the City of St. Cloud

One member each from the City of Sartell, City of Sauk Rapids, and City of Waite Park.

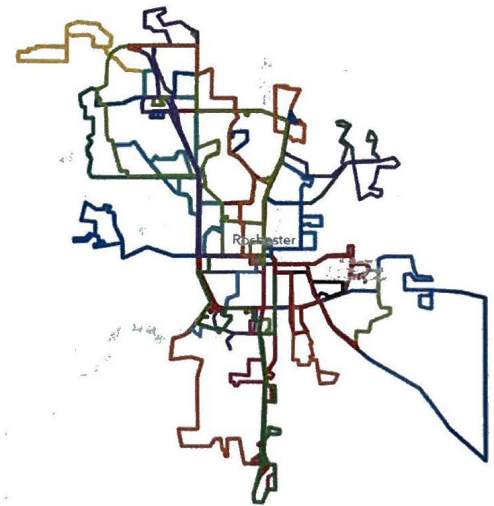
Board members traditionally have been either the current elected Mayor or City Council member.

## Rochester - Rochester Public Transit

Rochester Public Transit is managed by the City of Rochester which has a City Council of seven members. The City Council gets recommendations from the Citizens Advisory on Transit.

The advisory is composed of seven members appointed by the Mayor and approved by the Common Council. The seven members shall be selected based on the following criteria:

Resident of the City of Rochester with the exception of 1 seat which may be extended to a resident within the 4 surrounding townships of Rochester, Cascade, Marion or Haverhill.



## Winona Transit Service



### Transit Advisory Committee

12 seats on the committee staffed by the City Clerk

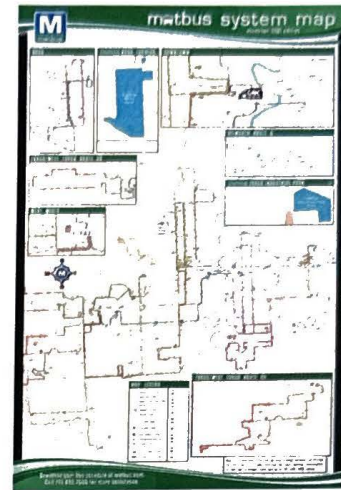
Advisory board only; any changes in our routes or service hours are approved by our governing board, which is the City Council.

## Fargo/Moorhead MATBUS

### Metro Area Transit Coordinating Board

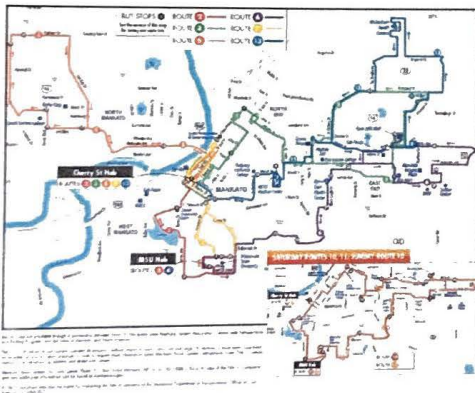
Membership: The MAT Coordination Board (Board) is comprised of twelve voting members. The appointment of voting membership shall be as follows :

- Fargo - two members of City Commission
- Moorhead - two members of City Council
- West Fargo - one member of City Commission
- Dillworth - one member of City Council.
- NDSU - one administrator
- MHD Colleges - one from each college (MSUM, MState, Concordia)
- Valley Senior Services - one administrator
- Board Chairperson - one



## Mankato Public Transit

Mankato Public Transit is managed by the City of Mankato which has a City Council of seven members.



Mankato has a charter form of government with a council-manager plan. Citizens elect the City Council, which consists of one Council Member for each of the city's five wards, a Council Member At-Large and a Mayor. The Council Member At-Large serves as president of the Council. The Mayor is a member of the City Council and is the ceremonial leader. Council members serve staggered, four-year terms.

The City Council gets recommendations from the Mankato/North Mankato Area Planning Organization

The Mankato/North Mankato Area Planning Organization (MAPO) will consist of 6 Policy Board members. Each member (or their appointed alternate) will be entitled to one full vote. No eligible voting member will have more than one vote. All of the membership will be local elected officials or their alternates. MAPO is advised by the Technical Advisory Committee.

Membership will be as follows:

City of Eagle Lake 1 Representative, City of Mankato 1 Representative, City of North Mankato 1 Representative, Blue Earth County 1 Representative, Nicollet County 1 Representative  
Townships 1 Representative.

**Public Testimony by Rev. Alfred Babington-Johnson to the Metropolitan Governance Task Force 1/5/24**

Mr. Chairman Hornstein and members of the Commission. I am Rev. Alfred Babington-Johnson the CEO of the Stairstep Foundation and Convener of His Works United, the largest ecumenical coming together of African American churches in the State of Minnesota.

We are currently engaged in litigation against the Met Council based on its housing and land use policies. The Council, by action and inaction, has not encouraged or allocated subsidized housing development appropriately, consequently advancing racial segregation and causing economic disadvantage to the Black community.

The perpetuation of segregated communities has, as a negative outcome, demonstrable social disparities. Any analysis of these disparities, often labeled as social determinants, finds African American people being at the greatest disadvantage on metrics that track health, wealth, education, or life expectancy. These outcomes are not inevitable but come about because of contemplations and actions consistent with the rationale of a Supreme Court that issued the Plessy v Ferguson decision in 1896. That Court put forward the notion that separating accommodations for whites and blacks was legitimate if those accommodations were equal. It took more than half a century for a more sober court to reject that sophistry and cry out in Brown v Bd Ed of Topeka, Kansas, that separate is inherently equal.

More right thinking was prompted by the marches and protests led by the African American community and Black Pastors together with labor leaders and motivated whites who carried the legacy of their abolitionist forbears. Fruit from this tree was landmark legislation: The Civil Rights Act of 1964 to end racial discrimination, The Civil Rights Act of 1965 seeking to protect voting rights, and then to end the decade, President Lyndon Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act of 1968, which included Title VIII the Fair Housing Act.

This Act called for recipients of federal funds to affirmatively further Fair Housing. This was intended to unite what the Kerner Commission earlier termed the two Americas that were, in fact, separate and in fact unequal.

Here, Mr. Chairman, we come to the crux of our testimony today. After a sterling performance in advancing fair housing in the 1970s, the Met Council lost the focus of affirmatively pursuing equal housing opportunities throughout the metropolitan area.

If this august body were made up of elected officials, then our voices of discontent at the Council's actions, inactions, and unintended consequences would be met with accountability at the ballot box. The appointed nature of this body insulates it from the concerns, opinions, and disappointment of the members of the districts the council purports to represent.

The stakes are too high. The issues are too critical to allow metropolitan decision-makers to operate without regard to the wishes of the governed. We need an elected Metropolitan Council.

My name is Matt Lehman Shakopee Mayor, I have been a Shakopee council member since Jan 2002 so I have unique perspectives and experiences gathered over the years. Our current and past city councils support met council restructuring and changes. I am a supporter of the Minnesota land planning act and the comprehensive planning process as originally intended. The original intent was to plan for and accommodate growth, not direct it and operate it. To ensure adjoining local jurisdictions visions for growth where compatible to neighboring land uses and be properly planned for regional infrastructure capacity needs. This was the original intent.

I would encourage the Metropolitan governance task force to research and compare our MPO to comparable MPO's across the country, you will find we have the only MPO made up of an unelected body with the broadest authority.

Largest budget in the country, larger than 15 plus comparable MPO'S combined.

Only MPO in country with taxing authority as an unelected body.

Even with the largest budget, broadest authority & scope, and least accountability, we lag most of our comparable MPO'S in performance measures, why?

The current structure has a perception of political in nature which loses 50% credibility.

The focus should be on planning for and capitalizing on existing local efforts throughout the MPO area, planning on how best to capitalize on existing and differing alternatives like bus rapid transit, hov lanes etc. likewise with local housing initiatives. I believe the best way to capture and capitalize on these opportunities and leverage the shared desired outcomes is to recognize cities and counties are different, one size does not fit all, and having a makeup of non partisan local elected officials from within the MPO serving on the met council brings that collaboration, experience, and diversity of resources into the proper planning process as originally intended in the Minnesota land planning act and MPO . The research of other MPO'S shows narrowed scope and authority, combined with more accountability and collaboration netted much greater and less expensive results. In summary, local elected bodies are held responsible and expected to make local decisions by their constituents, their visions reflect the people they serve. Thank you for your time and efforts on this worthy cause.



MET COUNCIL Governance Task Force listening session, January 9, 2024, 6 pm

Hello, I'm Bob Coughlen, Savage City Councilmember

City of Savage 2024 Legislative Priorities includes the following:

**Oppose Metropolitan Council governance reform that includes separately elected officials.**

- The City of Savage supports the appointment of Metropolitan Council members by the Governor with four-year, staggered terms for members to stabilize ideological shifts and provide for continuity of knowledge on the Council, which is appropriate for a long-range planning body.
- The City of Savage supports a nominating committee process that maximizes participation input by local officials, which the City of Savage has been a part of in the past.
- The City of Savage supports expanding the nominating committee from seven to 13 members, with a majority of a 13-member committee being local elected officials.
  - Of the local officials appointed to a nominating committee, two-thirds should be elected city officials, appointed by Metro Cities.
- Consideration should be given to the creation of four separate nominating committees, with committee representation from each quadrant of the region.

The following highlights I have been asked to present not as a representative of the Savage City Council, but as a concerned citizen:

Under Governance:

- As noted before, the MET Council governing body is not just a bunch of partisan friends handpicked by the Governor, but a vetted selection of non-partisan individuals qualified in transportation, housing, parks & natural resources, human services, wastewater management and regional planning.
- They have been selected by a committee of elected officials and trusted community leaders that represent our communities.
- The idea of no representation in the selection process is false and misleading
  - Appointments are selected by the representatives of the people
  - Remember that council members are subject to Senate Confirmation
- The decisions and guidance of the Met Council are not just limited to a select few at the Council Member governing level. Most of the work is done by staff and committees.
  - I am on the Transportation Advisory Board (TAB) that vets and recommends action for approval

Legislative task force main objectives, to consider:

If Met Council should be a Council of Governments – that cities and counties would choose a locally elected official to serve as their Met Council director.

- Existing elected officials do not have the time or compensation for this extra responsibility.
  - I already attend up to 4 City Council meetings a month along with prep time and special events
  - 4 additional assigned organizations representing the City of Savage

- SCALE (Scott County Association for Leadership and Efficiency)
- 169 Coalition
- Suburban Transit Association
- I serve as an alternate on the MET Council Transportation Advisory Board (TAB)
  - Over 20 hours a month as a part time obligation on top of my regular job
- As an Elected official, I already have a local responsibility that shouldn't be diluted with the MET Council, giving a disservice to both institutions.
- I DO NOT support a Council of Governments

If Met Council Directors should be elected as a stand alone position – Met Council reps would run and be elected in the general election:

- Electing non-qualified partisan officials will bring partisanship to the met council, causing discord and misdirection.
- Elected representatives will think first for their communities and not for the greater regional good, pushing for projects only in their constituency and opposing needed items through NIMBY – Not In My Back Yard.
- Don't let this become another partisan fighting ground like other current political process's
- I DO NOT support an elected stand alone position

If the scope of the Met Council is appropriate and if their responsibilities should change:

- Most of the local complaints about the MET Council decision process have been because of the bureaucracy.
  - Difficulty getting projects approved
  - Failing to get projects approved
  - Having rules and guidelines put upon their community (like affordable housing and housing density)
    - Nobody likes being told what to do, just ask my kids
- The Scope and operational efficiency are the top objectives this task force should focus on.

### **In Conclusion**

**Nonpartisanship** and cooperative collaboration overseeing larger regional needs have been the foundation of the successes of the MET Council over the years.

**Why are we really considering a change?** Please take the time to look under the veil at the unspoken reasons. Don't let a couple high profile issues be the excuse to make changes for the minority that have had an axe to grind for years. Don't chop down the tree, properly groom it for future growth.

Don't believe that new governance will change the bureaucracy and make all your dreams come true. You will still be denied things and told what to do, just with divided leadership and less functional direction.

I support keeping the current system of MET Council nominations and appointments with an emphasis on reevaluating their Scope, Responsibilities and operational processes.

Thank You,

Bob Coughlen

Testimony:

Over the past 50+ years, the Met Council has been tasked with doing more and more things. Transit, waste water, land use planning, parks, affordable housing, and more.

It is clear, though, that the organization and structures put in place over those 50 years are no longer sustainable or properly functional.

It's really not reasonable to expect a single entity to do so many disparate tasks well. Instead, in order to get "best in class" results, each of the Met Council's responsibilities should be reassigned to state, county, or local agencies with relevant expertise (with the new agency of course receiving the budget monies that had been earmarked for the task).

In addition, a key part of the reassignment process needs to be asking if ANY centralized agency should be doing the task, or if a decentralized approach is more responsive to citizens, or if a task should even be done at all.

Trying to determine a better governance model for the Met Council is a failed approach; any of the proposed changes won't really fix the underlying problems with the Met Council. Only dramatic and audacious steps to remove the responsibility for each of the duties from the Met Council can do that.

Mike Stapf  
Prior Lake



Good evening members of the Task Force. I am Jerry MacDonald, the Chair of the Southwest Transit Commission and a Chanhassen City Councilmember. With me is Erik Hansen, our CEO.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak to you tonight regarding governance of the Met Council. As you already know, Southwest Transit works closely with the Met Council as a transit provider operating under a Joint Powers Agreement between the cities of Eden Prairie, Chanhassen and Chaska. We also provide service into Carver, Victoria, Shakopee, Edina, Bloomington, MSP Airport and downtown Minneapolis.

We view our relationship with Met Council as a partnership. We can't do our work without them to be quite candid. However, as we are painfully aware, often the system naturally creates conflicts that we must intentionally work to overcome. We have one suggestion that might help reduce that conflict so that we all can focus on providing transit services to our customers rather than fighting over resources.

The inherent conflict becomes abundantly clear during any discussion of financial resources. A significant portion of our resources are at the discretion of Met Council. About \$1.1 million annually of our operating revenues under the Motor Vehicle Sales Tax is discretionary. Our capital improvement funds which amounts to \$1.4 million annually is also discretionary. Finally, we are completely reliant on the discretion of Met Council for funding for all our vehicles, which are obviously crucial for the delivery of transit services.

You can imagine if you were running a government agency or a business how unstable that might feel and more to the point how difficult it would be to plan ahead, when much of your revenues needed to run your operation are completely out of your control.

As I hinted earlier, this has played out in real life recently, an example that illustrates a system that is built for conflict. Last fall the Met Council staff gave a presentation to the Met Council of the whole in which they outlined a general plan for how to spend the new sales tax authorized by the state legislature, which was estimated to generate \$21.2 billion in the next 30 years. A pie chart on page 6 of that presentation explains that 86% of those new revenues were meant for Met Council, ie Metro Transit and 14% for "new initiatives." To be fair there was a brief mention of the suburban transit providers in



this mix, but nothing specific. We also do want to acknowledge that we will receive \$3 million from these sales tax funds, but this is a drop in the bucket compared to the \$21.2 billion over 30 years. I think you can understand how our citizens and customers who depend on our transit service might wonder why they are paying these sales taxes with very little benefit. I believe we already know ... I think the answer is embedded in this system designed for conflict.

It is natural for the Met Council to look to fund Metro Transit and its other transit services first. Frankly, we don't blame them at all for that because this is the way the system was setup ... setup for conflict. As I said earlier, we view our relationship with Met Council as a partnership, and we believe that this partnership can thrive even more by separating the governance of Met Council from the governance of Metro Transit. Can we eliminate all conflict if this fundamental change occurs? Of course not. But by making this change we have an opportunity to place all the transit providers on a more equal playing field. By creating a system that is more level, that is less incentivized for conflict, we believe we can focus more on the important business at hand of providing transit service to our customers ... which honestly is where all of our efforts should be.

Jerry MacDonald

Chair, Southwest Transit Commission



**City of Lakeville**  
*Positioned to Thrive*

January 2, 2024

To the Metropolitan Governance Task Force:

Thank you for the opportunity to address issues related to governance and scope of the Metropolitan Council. The current governance structure has led to concerns from both parties which is why this group of bipartisan leaders has gathered to help chart a new direction.

The crux of the matter is that all Metropolitan Council members, crucial in regional planning, are appointed by and serve at the pleasure of the Governor. While this system may have worked in some respects, it has inadvertently led to a lack of diversity and local representation, often tied to the party affiliation of the sitting Governor.

To address this, we support a shift in the selection process of the Metropolitan Council to increase the role and representation of local units of government. The City of Lakeville has adopted a position that local governments be afforded an opportunity to provide input in the selection process of the members who represent us. Doing this would help ensure that the Metropolitan Council include the voices of our local governments, both cities and counties. Under this process, cities would have the opportunity to provide the input of locally elected officials who understand their communities' unique challenges and opportunities. This approach fosters a sense of local ownership and accountability and can bridge the gap between regional planning and the concerns of residents.

Changes made to the Metropolitan Council's governance model should be focused on enhancing its usefulness to local governments in serving the residents of our communities and the entire region and not simply creating another competing elected layer of government.

We recognize that change can be met with skepticism and assure you that this proposal is not about undermining the authority of the Governor but about enhancing the democratic processes. Let us work together to create an efficient regional planning body that reflects our communities' rich diversity, ensuring that all residents voices are heard and respected in shaping the future of our metropolitan area.

Sincerely,

Luke Hellier  
Mayor

cc: Lakeville City Council  
Lakeville Legislative Delegation

# Regarding MPO Certification & Met Council Structure

Mathews Hollinshead, former TAB member, [REDACTED], St. Paul

---

I served as a transit modal representative on the Met Council's Transportation Advisory Board (TAB) for seven years — 2016 through 2023, and before that as Minnesota organizer promoting the intact reauthorization of the Federal transportation funding reform law then known as ISTEA, originally sponsored by Senator Daniel Moynihan in 1990. It was this law that guaranteed direct funding from the Federal Government to Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) to balance urban investment with rural and suburban investment from Federal gas tax revenues.

As you know the current Metropolitan Council is qualified as a metropolitan planning organization or MPO in part because it delegates distribution of Federal surface transportation funds to the Transportation Advisory Board (TAB), which has eight district, seven county, ten city, five agency and four modal voting reps. I believe the organic Federal surface transportation law (originally passed as the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act or ISTEA in 1991) requires that Federal surface transportation funding decisions be made by a body (in our case the TAB) consisting of a majority of elected officials. This delegation to the TAB means that, in surface transportation Federal funding, the current Met Council, while appointed by the Governor and nominally representing equal districts, is technically in effect a Council of Governments (COG) model, not a proportional representation model, because it is the TAB whose Federal transportation funding decisions are final, not the Met Council. It is also true that the MPO designation is grandfathered in because our Met Council predates ISTEA but, equally qualifying, because one of TAB's agency reps (Suburban Transit Association) is an indirectly elected official, making TAB's membership 18 (indirectly) elected officials and 17 directly appointed officials — qualifying as an MPO.

As I testified to this body earlier, I believe it essential that any structural change to the Met Council result in direct, proportionally-elected membership, not a Council of Governments (COG) model. As Hennepin County Commissioner Marion Greene eloquently pointed out on January 3, the real constituents of the Met Council's immensely impactful regional programs — including its huge regional transportation investments and operations — are voters, not governments. Citizens should not have to penetrate two layers of indirect representation to understand and hold accountable the use of \$200-\$300M in categorical Federal surface transportation funds every cycle — not to mention the billions in Federal Transit Admin (FTA) capital funds for New Starts projects such as the Blue and Green Lines. If Southwest LRT and the Blue Line Extension had been planned under a directly-elected Met Council, I submit to you that those lines would be operating today at much less up-front capital cost and delay.

The many existing jurisdictions within the seven-county metro area are actually big government. A proportionately-elected Met Council will actually be smaller government, provided it has the power of a home rule charter. This is because the size of government is directly related to its complexity and it's complexity is directly related to the number of jurisdictional boundaries and barriers that stand in the way of getting anything done for the region as a whole.

The 3.2 million citizens most affected by what the Met Council does deserve and require a direct, proportional say in who sits on the Council. Those who preside over Met Council programs and operations should have no divided allegiances to other governments. They should also have the independence of a full-time position and salary. Anything less, or different, will deprive us of self-government at the level which, I submit, has come to be most important in many of our affairs.

## Regarding Metropolitan Governance

My thoughts about regional governance of our metropolitan area have been shaped by both my reading of Myron Orfield's 1986 book on the topic, "Metropolitix" and by my service for the past four years as the non-motorized representative on the Met Council's Transportation Advisory Board (TAB) (first as an alternate, and since 2022 as the primary seat-holder).

I am persuaded of the value of regional planning & governance and have long perceived the potential of the Metropolitan Council. Yet, as currently instantiated, it is not delivering on its potential in many ways. Making the Met Council an elected body *might* partially ameliorate this, but only if done in a way that leads to a Council with truly regional convictions, without conflicting jurisdictional loyalties to cities or counties, and has the agency to act on those convictions.

A truly effective regional council would enforce growth boundaries, focus development densely vs. in a sprawling manner, create effective public transit, provide adequate & equitably distributed low-income housing, and prevent the otherwise ubiquitous problem of suburbs and exurbs free-riding in a way that concentrates social needs and dysfunctions and other costs on the core cities. All these things would be in the best interests of the region. That doesn't mean accomplishing these goals would be without winners and losers.

My service on TAB has provided both interactions with and observations of a variety of our local elected representatives. From these experiences, my sense is that plenty of planning and governance decisions may best be made at a *municipal* level, but that there are plenty that would best be made at a *regional* level. Yet it is often the counties that hold the greatest power over many planning and governance decisions. Yet, simply stated, the counties do not always act in the best interests of the region. So it is often county governance that seems to be a problem in many ways when it comes to planning of our transportation and transit systems, and I can see how this is likely also the case with sewer and water management, and parks and open spaces - all areas over which Met Council is supposed to have authority.

This leads me to believe that a "council of governments" model, in which the Met Council would just be a composite of sitting County Commissioners, for instance, would be one of the worst ideas. As would be setting up an elected body that had boundaries that just mapped onto existing County boundaries. In some ways, the TAB itself has many of these unfortunate features.

One way to encourage a Met Council with a truly regional orientation and adequate agency would be to draw jurisdictional lines in a way that accomplished proportional population representation and that would cut across multiple counties, creating competing constituencies with them. By helping Council members see and understand where they have common cause, this structure could help foster the sort of coalition-building Orfield identified so many years ago as an important feature of an effective regional Council. A further change that might be beneficial on this front would be if a greater separation of powers could be created between the counties and the Council with respect to planning and governance of our transportation, sewer, and transit systems, with the Council having primary jurisdiction over those functions. I have little hope that such a change will be entertained, however.

Finally, in order to attract the best leaders to an elected Met Council, these positions would also need to be full-time, and pay a "competitive" wage.

Thank you for your service on the task force, and for the opportunity to offer my thoughts.

Brian C. Martinson, PhD

██████████, Saint Paul, MN 55105

# Metropolitan Council Task Force Testimony 1/9/2024

**Name: Abu Nayeem**

**St. Paul resident**

**Community advocate; Board Member of Hamline Midway Coalition**

I have orally testified twice:

#1: 12/8/23- Testimony of traumatic transit police incident

#2: 1/5/23- Testimony of renaming the MET Council to MET Governor's council and recommendation to split areas of focus (more in written testimony)

I have prepared a written testimony: One expressing a recommendation and another expressing a concern.

## A- Task-Force Recommendation

First, I would like to thank the task force for holding these sessions, as I have learned a lot about the MET council through the hearings. I have a MS in Agricultural and Resource Economics from UC Berkeley. Also I ran for St. Paul city council for Ward 1, and for St. Paul mayor in 2021. I'm genuinely interested in government structures, and take a systems approach. My recommendation is heavily influenced by prior testimony. I'll do my best to provide an outline on how the task force should approach getting to a common solution.

**Reality:** From citizen input, it is clear that the MET council does way too much, and are unclear on who the responsible parties are. Broadly speaking, citizens always favor more representation and voice, but administratively it can lead to partisanship in elections, and increase time & money for completion of projects. You can look at the city of San Francisco to see how layers of consensus models lead to stagnation and increased costs for development. Here are the three priority questions and considerations that I have for the taskforce.

**1) What are the distinct areas of focus that the MET Council cover AND for each focus area, does it make sense to have elected representation, administration-based, appointee (current), or hybrid councils (appointee & elected)?**

- a) For Example: I think Metro Transit should have elected members because citizens are impacted on a daily basis, and public safety is a high-priority. The Metro transit covers multiple cities, and counties. In addition, citizens have considerable concerns (provided testimony) on policing.
- b) I think a hybrid model can make sense for environmental projects.

- c) Housing is very complicated. From my understanding, Metro HRA is both a public housing authority and engaged with capital housing investments. Those are distinct roles.

**2) Who chooses the appointees?**

- a) Currently, it is partisan because the governor have exclusive right to appoint
- b) My recommendation would be to
  - i) Follow the appointee process for federal judges initiated by the US president, and then approved by US Congress. The governor's appointees would need to be approved by the legislature. This process is not partisan-based, in principle, and allows legislators and the public to learn who the appointee is
  - ii) Have the appointee process be at the midpoint of the governor's four year term. This has two significant impacts: 1) it's less partisan because dramatic shifts on leadership cannot occur all at once. 2) the appointee and recently elected- governor is encouraged to work across bi-partisan lines. 3) The "tradeoff" of my proposal is that it creates resistance to rapid change, though creates long-term stability. Stability can be very valuable for long-term environmental goals [hence breaking MET council by areas of focus]

**3) What is the role and payment of the appointees?**

- a) IMO The primary role of the Met Council is to provide oversight of the MET council administrative staff, and can make some recommendations
  - i) I do not know the agency and decision-making process between the staff and council members. Ideally it should be fair, for all parties involved. Though the decision-making structure should be clear and accessible to the public.
- b) It is clear to me that current appointees do not have the time or compensated fairly for the duties present. It should be a full-time role. If the council is broken down to areas of focus, then the appointees, elected or not, can be specialists in the field. The council can now adequately assess and audit the department

So in summary, the MET council should be broken down to areas of focus, and then the task force decides on how these focus areas should be governed. Ultimately, the governor will need to approve the legislation, and the proposal may not align with the governor's interest. I'm not a state legislator. As a citizen organizer, I would repeatedly name the MET Council as the "MET Governor's council" to indicate to citizens clearly that the current dysfunctionality and responsibility of the MET council is on the governor. Unfortunately, any criticism or highlight of the governorship may be viewed from a partisan lens. For proper governance, elected officials need to put their ego and political affiliations aside. Thank you for reading.

# Express Concern: Public Health Emergency on the Light Rail

[Note: My second testimony was suppose to be about my experience on the light rail transit; I'm using 'users' to describe drug-users and addicts]

The current conditions on the light rail transit is unacceptable, and it's a public emergency. Last Christmas day, I was riding the Green Line eastward toward St. Paul around 2:20 pm. Once I got in the passenger car at US Bank Stadium, there were two separate groups of active drug-users on each tail of the car. They were actively smoking hard drugs such as meth, fentanyl, and etc. The ratio of drug-users to non-users was around 5 to 1.

The air was suffocating, and I started to get dizzy. However, I needed to stay alert as one passenger looked like they overdosed, as their body was completely limp in a nearly impossible sleeping position. After one minute, I asked his buddy to determine if he was fine. If he wasn't okay, I would have called 911. At the Snelling stop, a group of passengers came on the train, and immediately started using it with no regard.

Afterwards, I shared my experience with the community boards. This experience is COMMON to regular users, and many citizens no longer use the light rail because of the danger AND health risk to passengers. One of my friends adequately described it; "the light rail is not just an open drug market, it's a "moving drug den". From now on, I'll be carrying a naloxone kit when taking the light rail because the conditions are that bad.

I'm really frustrated by the lack of response of the MET council and legislative leadership in addressing this public health emergency. These conditions are permissible because the harm does NOT impact privileged persons that can take alternative transportation. The state was shut down during COVID precautions, but MET council has the luxury to wait months on end as most under-privileged and vulnerable populations are exposed to harmful air quality.

My recommendations are the following:

- 1) Consider what tourists would think about the Twin Cities if seeing the present conditions
- 2) Members of the Transportation Committee or any elected state representative should commute to the capitol using the light rail for one month. There is ample free parking on the empty parking lots of the Midway. Until elected officials see and experience the conditions of the light rail, there will be no political urgency to address this health crisis.
- 3) I'm not an elected official. My solution would be to close the light rail transit for six months, with additional buses covering the routes. The goal is to remove the normalization of users that the train is a suitable space to deal and use drugs. Users will find alternative gathering spaces to pursue drug activity. Ideally, local cities can have alternatives to users. When the light rail re-opens the MET council can create a reset on enforcement, and presence. This will slowly increase citizen confidence in the light rail and increasing ridership.

Thank you for reading.





I moved to CICA in 2017. After attending board meetings I learned we had spent \$180,000 for legal expenses and a vulnerability study of our structures due to damages caused by construction and concern for more possible damages from tunnel construction and train operations as they got underway. I went to a hearing of the Legislative Commission on Metropolitan Governance at which Sen. Scott Newman called out Jim Alexander for his hubris after stating that there was no Plan B. Their experts assured them Plan A would succeed. Our then engineers presented their opinion to the contrary.

In 2019, I attended meetings by both Senate and House Transportation Committees and presented testimony urging the Legislature to mandate mediation. We were seeking agreement on a vibrational study, compensation for consulting, fair compensation limits for owner's damages and guarantees on pre-construction surveys. The Legislature mandated mediation through the Office of Collaboration and Dispute Resolution. Mariah Levison acted as Mediator.

Unfortunately, the mediation was doomed in the very first session when general counsel for the Met Council stated unequivocally that they would not pay any compensation, enter any contract or make any binding agreements. To demonstrate good faith, we stayed in talks as recommended by the mediator (at a cost of \$15,000). She asked the Met Council to write the final report and gave CICA three days to approve it. We rejected it and wrote our own report. (previously submitted to the record)

Prior to mediation, CICA had reached out to the Southwest Project Office to meet and we continue weekly construction meetings to this day. The meetings were cordial, open and productive. We hired an engineer to take us through construction who developed a good working relationship with the SPO. They kept him informed and listened to his opinions and warnings. They changed their methods to avoid damage to our structures and halted construction in 2020 when soil subsidence issues threatened during sheet piling. A year later, work began on the "secant wall". Work continued sporadically until January 27, 2022 when a 10th floor resident found carpet tiles separating in her hallway and felt "holes" in the floor. We lifted tiles from the 10<sup>th</sup> to the 3<sup>rd</sup> floors and found a 3/4" crack. We called our building manager, who called the SPO that evening. By 10:30 the next morning a Socotec engineer arrived from Chicago to inspect and determine cause. We were told they were independent and objective, and had been lead forensics teams on a list of disasters - we granted them access. I researched Socotec and their projects. There were no search results on them, only their website. Nor were there results for their reports on the projects we were told about. The Socotec website boasted 400 employees, 120 of whom were "expert witnesses" now changed to "dispute resolution experts". Our weekly meetings are chilled and answers only come after clearance. All this shakes my trust in the Council's motives and the engineering reports themselves.

A final report on April 12th presented the causes as: 75% temperature changes; 25% freight train vibration, wind loading, deferred maintenance and construction. We were denied supporting data because it was protected by attorney client privilege. All information is now passed through attorney's which is an additional expense to us. The deferred maintenance named an old "tunnel" under the foundation for grain removal. This caused us to hire an assessment (\$10,000) and include it on our disclosure form for would be sellers. The engineer debunked the assertion. When the footing for the tunnel was later removed as an "impediment", Mr. Alexander publicly referred to it as a "nothing burger" for which he has apologized. Despite our questions about soil conditions, we were told they could not have played any part in spite of the soil subsidence that caused them to change methods and repeated work stoppages due to sink holes and soil erosion under the freight rails.

I have searched for engineering expertise to verify or counter their claims. I searched for top attorneys who specialized in construction litigation. When the damage occurred, my two first choices for

engineer and lawyer had conflicts of interest. The Met Council has engaged so many engineering firms and attorneys that there are very few of either in the state of Minnesota without conflicts. Our engineer at the start of construction was at NTI. He left and went to Braun Intertec - contracted by MC. His replacement worked with us until NTI was purchased by AET - contracted by MC. Our present engineer retired from NTI and lives in VA. I have searched in NDAK, SDAK, KS and now in CA for a capable counter to Socotec - probably out of our price range but I am still looking.

In August of 2022 we entered into a second mediation with the Met Council hoping to be made whole and avoid further litigation. We were encouraged by Mr. Zelle's public statement that they would leave us in better shape than they found us.

Our buildings have been braced and our elevator lobbies are a shambles. Monitors attached to floors stripped of their carpeting, wallpaper half stripped, art removed, ceilings with temporary patches. Our engineer advises against restoring it until trains are operating – 2027? Almost \$1,000,000 in damages to date and work continues. More building separation with cracks in floors, ceilings and walls widening at an accelerating pace. Work is now by our garage, which is even more vulnerable. It already has sustained major damage including flooding, power failure, sinking, crumbling block, loss of function to a brand new door, and separation of a staircase from the garage.

Due to condemnation litigation for permanent and temporary easements that won't be settled until at least 2025, we are ineligible for FHA financing. Assessed values dropped 25% in high rises and 23% in town homes. Market values have dropped while surrounding values have soared. Many or most of the residents are of retirement age or greater and many may not survive this project. Nobody can escape this disaster without losing a significant share of what is, for many, their net wealth.

There is more but because of our agreement to confidentiality during mediation, I have not included any of the incidents, disappointments, broken commitments, or threats we have endured involving it.

We have been called NIMBYs, even racists. I can't imagine anyone wanting this in their backyard or in their lobbies or apartments or even 230 trains a day running just inches from their foundation. A few of us cling to the hope that the Council will deliver on Mr. Zelle's promise. Some of us not so much.

Jim Nikora  
Minneapolis, MN

# CICA - SWLRT

A pictorial overview of the impact to CICA both along the Kenilworth Trail and in the indoor common areas





**Kenilworth Trail next to CICA Parking deck 6-5-2019**

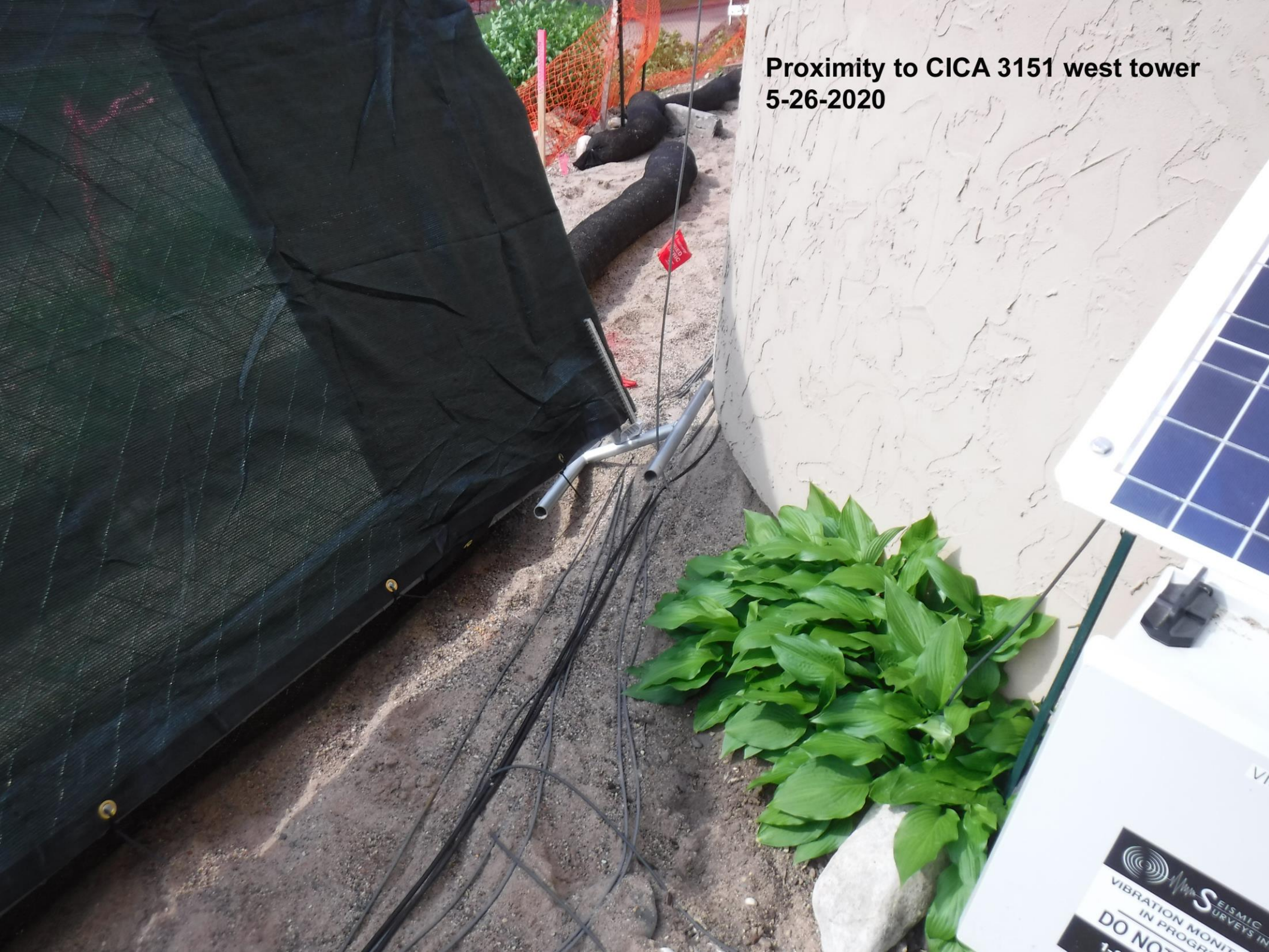


**CICA 3151 west tower prior to beginning of construction including private resident garden 5-19-2020**





Proximity to CICA 3151 west tower  
5-26-2020



VIBRATION MONITORING  
IN PROGRESS  
DO NOT  
1-



Proximity to CICA 3151 west tower 5-26-2020





Proximity to CICA 3151 tower 3-9-2021






3151 8th floor cracks  
10-8-2022

SCRIPT TRANSCRIPT TRANSCRIPT  
3151 8  
3151 8  
3151 8

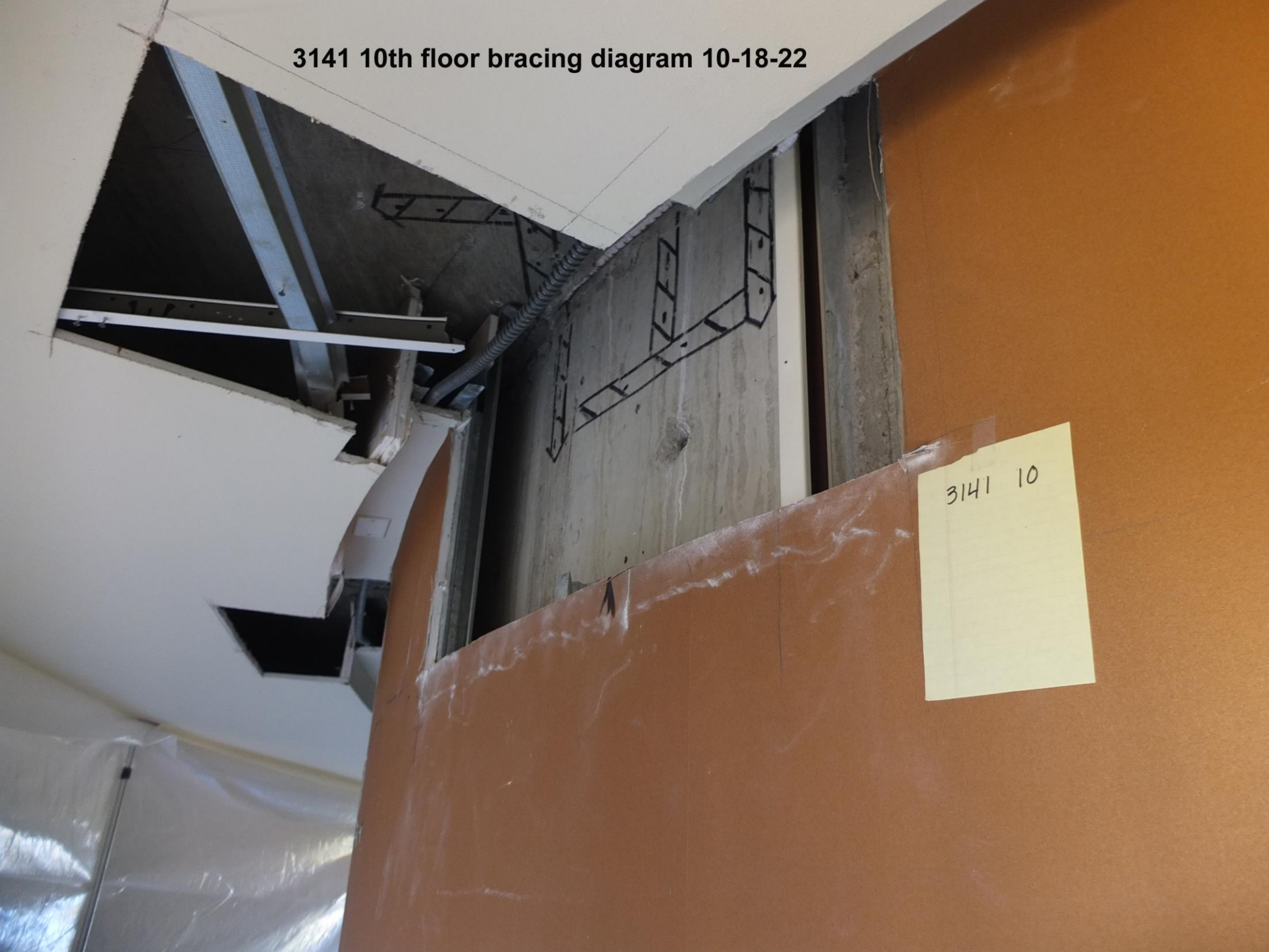




3151 8th floor repair bracing 10-18-2022



3141 10th floor bracing diagram 10-18-22



3141 10



CICA- new garage door damage 9-6-2023





**Tunnel work adjacent to CICA parking deck and garage wall 9-6-2023  
view to southwest**





**Tunnel construction adjacent to parking deck and garage wall 9-6-2023**





**Drilling next to CICA  
10-26-2022**





12th floor elevator lobby to penthouse units 5-8-2023





3151 10th floor elevator lobby  
monitor and damage  
1-5-2024





3151 10th floor resident hallway ceiling  
1-5-2024







3151 10th floor monitor  
1-5-2024



3151 10th floor  
carpet separation, floor and wall cracks  
1-5-2024





3151 10th floor resident corridor floor and wall cracks  
1-5-2024






3151 10th floor floor and wall cracks 1-5-2024







**3141 10th floor elevator lobby 1-5-2024**

Testimony of Karen Schaffer, Council of Metropolitan Area Leagues of Women Voters (CMAL), to Metropolitan Governance Task Force of the Minnesota Legislature, January 10, 2024

Good Morning, Mr. Chairman. My name is Karen Schaffer. I am the Chair of the Council of Metropolitan Area Leagues of Women Voters, (CMAL), an inter-league organization comprised of the individual members of the 19 local league chapters in the seven-county metro area. CMAL was established in 1962 for the exclusive purpose of increasing the knowledge and effectiveness of our members with respect to regional government issues.

For those unfamiliar with the League of Women Voters, it is a nonpartisan, volunteer membership organization comprised of men and women, ages 16 and above. We do not support or oppose candidates or political parties, but we may study and act on selected issues, such as metropolitan governance.

CMAL's January 2019 metropolitan governance study is unique in that we had 37 League members interview 52 local elected officials and city or county staff to learn about their experience with the Metropolitan Council and its staff and their opinions about Metropolitan Council governance. We hosted educational forums with panelists sharing a variety of viewpoints on metropolitan governance. We did this to develop our Report which examines the pro and cons of various positions. Once our final Report was published, local leagues met to discuss the Report and vote on the various positions. The voting results from all of the individual members in the 19 league chapters showed a minimum of 82% (and up to 94%) agreement on the following positions:

- The Governor should appoint members and Chair of the Metropolitan Council;
- Members of the Metropolitan Council should be appointed to fixed, staggered terms, and removable only for cause;
- Metropolitan Council members should be required to have a regional perspective, knowledge of regional issues, demographic diversity, and the ability to meet the time requirements for serving in the office;
- Metropolitan Council members should not be local elected officials or be directly elected to the office of Metropolitan Council member; and
- A nominating committee should recommend a slate of Metropolitan Council nominees to the Governor, as part of an open appointment process that includes citizen, local government and legislative influence on appointments.

At its convention in 2019 the Council of Metropolitan Area Leagues of Women Voters (CMAL) formally adopted the above updated positions with respect to Metropolitan Council governance.

Our 2019 Metropolitan Council Governance report, including the various proposed positions, are included in the Blue Ribbon Committee Report, which is available to the Task Force.

Note: Only 30% of elected officials we interviewed favored appointment of elected officials to Metropolitan Council. Those who did felt that elected officials were better at communicating and would increase accountability. Of the 70% who did not support appointment of local elected officials, they said



such officials would not have the time, since most local elected officials also have full- time jobs, and they have incompatible interests associated with serving two different constituencies.

## 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)



# ***Citizen Advocates for Regional Transit***

***Universal Transit Mobility through Unified Transit Governance***

[www.C-A-R-T.org](http://www.C-A-R-T.org)

January 10, 2024

Additional Comments to Written Testimony submitted to the Task Force on January 5, 2024:

## **“Transit: Essential Structural Changes Needed”**

The referenced document recommends essential structural changes to Metro Transit governance and system development processes. We strongly urge the Task Force to include the following recommendations in its report to the Legislature:

- Metro Transit should continue to be part of the Metropolitan Council. Regardless of the decisions recommending the form of Governance structure, the Metropolitan Council is the best-positioned State Agency to be charged with the responsibility and accountability for developing, operating, and maintaining the Metro Transit System.

Suggestions have been made to separate Transit Operations from Transit Planning functions, either within the Metropolitan Council or by moving Operations to another agency. This would be unproductive because Best Practices for cohesive and responsive system design and effective operations require all stakeholders to be committed to the success of the System and accountable to a single responsible entity. Also, as explained in the referenced testimony, County Railroad Authorities should be consolidated into a Metropolitan Railroad Authority under the Metropolitan Council, preferably within Metro Transit.

- The Metro Transit System Planning and Development process should be re-structured. Metro Transit should be responsible for all phases of development, from visioning to operations. This should apply to all modes of transit and all types of funding, with input from all local government and public stakeholders. Funding and development priorities should be coordinated by Metro Transit based on overall System integrity and performance.

Currently, the responsibilities for route development are divided among the Counties and Metro Transit. Unfortunately, this has resulted in schedule delays, cost overruns, and a lack of trust from the public. The Riverview Corridor streetcar/ABrt project can serve as an example. The project has been under County project management for the development of a workable solution to their Locally Preferred Alternative since 2017...at a cost of seven million dollars...without satisfactory results.

We recognize that these structural changes are not the primary focus of the Task Force, but we ask that they be considered within the scope of the potential “*a la carte*” recommendations to be forwarded to the Legislature.

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in your deliberations!

Jay Severance

Citizen Advocates for Regional Transit (CART)

***CITIZEN ADVOCATES FOR REGIONAL TRANSIT***

350 St Peter St. Ste 409 St Paul, MN 55102 | Ph 651-797-2777 | Email Contact Form at [www.c-a-r-t.org](http://www.c-a-r-t.org)

**Ted Kolderie**

**Saint Paul MN 55102**

January 11, 2020

*Dear Representative Hornstein:*

I'll sharpen here, as I should have last Friday, the things you mainly want to know: What the Legislature should now do about the Metropolitan Council.

**1. Do make the Metropolitan Council elective.**

The Council's essential function is to bring to the Legislature the local agreement legislators need in order for the state to act on twin cities regional problems. It isn't local when it's an arm of state government.

The original Council was sufficiently local that in the 1969 session it worked. After six years of frustrating disagreement its proposal enabled the Legislature to solve the groundwater contamination problem.

If direct-election doesn't pass now, create districts each consisting of two Senate districts and provide that the six legislators will either 'elect' the member for that district or recommend to the governor the person to be appointed.

**2. Do not allow a 'council of governments'.**

Tried nationally, that approach to regional development did not work. The CoGs proved to be 'paper mills'; local officials routinely approving applications for federal aid submitted by local units. The whole arrangement was shut down by the national administration in 1981.

*An elected official is a person elected to the seat in which s/he is voting.*

**3. Get the Metro Council out of 'operations'.**

The 1994 legislation making it an 'operating body' is responsible for the dreadful situation today with transit. The Council has had to implement the

'system decision' for rail made by the counties. The arrangement for policy and operations the Legislature originally designed has been turned upside down.

Get the Council back to being the architect and general contractor on the job of regional development. Let the Department of Transportation, or a re-created Metropolitan Transit Commission, run transit . . . and build the light-rail if that is the concept of transit the Legislature wishes to continue.

ooo

It is good to look back to the beginning; to the arrangement the Legislature initially created. That lets us see what worked and what did not.

You have an opportunity now to make the metropolitan arrangement work again. And, I believe, to strengthen the role of the Legislature in the process.

Sincerely,

*Ted Kolderie*





January 15, 2024, Update  
Metropolitan Governance Task Force Public Input  
Topic: Most Large Infrastructure Projects Fail – 92%

How many public projects of this magnitude across the world result in an on-time, on budget or under budget outcome? Read this from a recent report and/or read this associated book:

1. Washington Post Article: [Expert explains how to finish infrastructure projects on time, budget - The Washington Post](#)
  2. 2023 Published Book: [How Big Things Get Done: The Surprising Factors That Determine the Fate of Every Project, from Home Renovations to Space Exploration and Everything In Between: Flyvbjerg, Bent, Gardner, Dan: 9780593239513: Amazon.com: Books](#)
- Summary Level Startling Conclusion: *In fact, no less than 92% of megaprojects come in over budget or over schedule, or both. The cost of California's high-speed rail project soared from \$33 billion to \$100 billion—and won't even go where promised. More modest endeavors, whether launching a small business, organizing a conference, or just finishing a work project on time, also commonly fail.*

If our global airline industry operated that way, with only an 8% on time performance, they would be totally out of business. In brief, is it too much to expect excellence at this simple, straightforward level, where on-time, on budget or under budget is the norm not the exception for only 8% of all projects? That is what I would like to see in the United States and beyond in the leadership and management of these massive projects in the year 2024 in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

Our Twin Cities Metro Council should be willing to lead the world in such an endeavor by employing proven performance excellence frameworks, principles, and best practices in the leadership and management of its major infrastructure projects.

Sincerely,

Dale F. Weeks, President, and CEO  
Global Leadership and Benchmarking Associates  
Minneapolis, MN USA  
Phone: 850-591-1076  
E-Mail: [dfwqlba@gmail.com](mailto:dfwqlba@gmail.com)  
ROES Consultant  
[Organizational Excellence Specialists](#)  
Member, Business Advisory Group, Venture Center, University of Minnesota  
[External Entrepreneurs | Office of the Vice President for Research \(umn.edu\)](#)  
Board Member: Global Benchmarking Network  
<https://www.globalbenchmarking.org>



January 12, 2024

Taylor Koehler, Staff Member  
Metropolitan Governance Task Force  
St. Paul, MN

E-Mail: [taylor.koehler@lcc.mn.gov](mailto:taylor.koehler@lcc.mn.gov)

Dear Task Force Staff and/or Members:

Please consider this as further public input on the current deliberations of your Metropolitan Governance Task Force. I have been tracking your progress over the past few months. As further consideration, please submit this background information as part of your public deliberations for January 17, 2024.

A. Professional Introduction

My name is Dale F. Weeks, President and CEO of Global Leadership and Benchmarking Associates, a performance excellence, global benchmarking, and executive leadership focused consulting service located here in Minneapolis.

From 2000-2011, Dale was Deputy Executive Director/Senior Executive Benchmarking Officer for the Florida Department of Revenue, the 6<sup>th</sup> largest state agency in Florida, and winner of the State of Florida Performance Excellence Award.

I have also served in similar performance excellence leadership capacities at the Minnesota Department of Revenue from 1994-2000. And, for 20 years, Dale directed major private sector initiatives for **Control Data Corporation, General Mills, and Xerox Corporation**. I also hold an MBA Degree in Finance from the University of Minnesota and a BS Degree in Mathematics from St. Lawrence University in Canton, N.Y.

B. The Current Global State of Leadership and Management

Recent studies have shown that organizations across all sectors globally are not realizing their full potential regarding exactly how they are being led and managed on a broad performance excellence basis. This reality is in spite of the fact that performance excellence frameworks have been available for several decades, from 1987 – 37 years ago!

1. Source: First Global Assessment of the State of Organizational Excellence:



### [Global OE Index – Organizational Excellence Specialists](#)

2. Source: Why Do We Undervalue Competent Management, Harvard Business Review, September – October 2017.

<https://hbr.org/2017/09/why-do-we-undervalue-competent-management>

In brief, these recent world-wide (30-40 countries, 12,000 businesses, 18 business practice areas as a sample) studies of management and excellence reach a similar startling conclusion: 10% or less of the organizations examined demonstrated exceptional leadership/management of their enterprises.

Or, said another way, 90% or more are considered “stuck in the middle,” managing by “muddling around”, managing by mediocrity, or other explicit indications of inadequate leadership and management competency.

We in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century can and must perform at a higher level or risk the continuing decline of our world today. That is indeed the stark reality we face today. Our citizens and customers deserve a much higher level of performance.

#### C. Specific Application to Our Metropolitan Council

##### 1. The Local State of Affairs

As others that have testified to this task force, Government organizations at all levels, like the Metro Council, are faced today with tremendous challenges. Cities and counties and regional governments across the country are confronted with similar fiscal problems.

Yet even as government managers and leaders are working to meet the mandates of providing public products and services, a substantial number have the grim task of reporting that their citizens will not get “more with less.”

More directly, the recent results and extensive cost overruns on the current Southwest LRT extension project demonstrate that large numbers of citizens have lost faith in the Metro Council’s leadership and management capacity to improve, let alone, achieve excellence.



Less widely known are the remarkable efforts and achievements of many in government. Pockets of excellence exist at all levels, in many places. Our 35+ year celebration of our Baldrige Performance Excellence Award process has included a select few government organizations. In addition, several State and Federal improvement initiatives are using the Lean Six Sigma method to drive process and results improvement.

## 2. The Broader, Global Perspective – Other Nations are Exceeding Our Performance and We Are Being Left Behind

As I synthesize my thoughts from recent conferences where I have spoken/presented, I would offer the view that there are hundreds of global success stories in the broad arena of Citizen Friendly or Customer Friendly government management category. The guiding light is being provided by countries like Canada, New Zealand, Australia, Singapore, Malaysia, South Africa, United Arab Emirates, the Philippines, and beyond.

These global success stories demonstrate a leadership commitment and passion for performance excellence I have rarely seen in our United States, in Minnesota or beyond. Entrepreneurs are alive and well across the globe in all types of government organizations.

Nevertheless, despite the good efforts and work done by many in government improvement, there is no endeavor that I have observed over the last 5- 10 years at the Metro Council to apply and use performance excellence frameworks or global best management practices comprehensively and systematically over a long period of time.

Our Twin Cities citizens across our region and the entire state today deserve a QUANTUM LEAP in operational performance excellence in the coming years across all levels of Metro Council operational management. The approaches and strategies being used today in 2024 are not working on a broad scale, I would advise.

### D. My One Major Strategic Leadership Recommendation

I would highly recommend that the leadership at all levels of our Metro Council become immediately familiar with, and begin the active implementation of, the principles and practices involved with proven global performance excellence frameworks.



This would be implemented on a broad, universal, total organizational scale across the entire Metro Council enterprise of 4,000+ employees, its entire budget of \$1.2++ Billion budget, to include all divisions and departments.

We, as citizens of the Twin Cities, the State of Minnesota, and of the United States, expect this level of exceptional global performance excellence bold leadership from our Metro Council.

I await your response so we can move forward together to make this visionary direction a reality in the shortest time possible. Our urgency is now. This deserves your highest priority. Our world beckons for more performance excellence.

Please feel free to call on me if you would like to discuss this in more depth.

I look forward to sharing in greater depth during deliberations with our Metropolitan Government Task Force in the coming weeks in 2024.

Thank You.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dale F. Weeks". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line under the name.

Dale F. Weeks, President, and CEO  
Global Leadership and Benchmarking Associates  
Minneapolis, MN USA  
Phone: 850-591-1076  
E-Mail: [dfwglba@gmail.com](mailto:dfwglba@gmail.com)  
ROES Consultant

[Organizational Excellence Specialists](#)

Member, Business Advisory Group, Venture Center, University of Minnesota  
[External Entrepreneurs | Office of the Vice President for Research \(umn.edu\)](#)

Board Member: Global Benchmarking Network  
<https://www.globalbenchmarking.org>

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



Name: Cole Hiniker

Live in: Minneapolis

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.

Good day Mr. Chair and members of the Metropolitan Governance Task Force.

I would like to provide a personal perspective on governance changes of the Met Council. In the summer of 2022, our quiet neighborhood in rural Credit River learned of a concept plan for an 86-acre development that was being considered. For a multitude of reasons, many in our community were alarmed and feared losing our idyllic surroundings to this development. We live less than a mile away from a 2785-acre park reserve. There are farm fields, wetlands, a remnant of the Big Woods, abundant wildlife, and homestead properties around us ranging from 2.5-acres to 40-acres. This area can best be described as rural residential and literally a slice of heaven. The aforementioned reasons account for why our citizens moved to Credit River and desire to protect it from dense population expansion.

Many of us banded together as a group of concerned citizens. We actively attended city council meetings, city planning meetings, surveyed our residents, hosted neighborhood meetings, hosted our own citizen led citywide meeting, sent emails, and a few from our group even met with a Met Council Representative that is knowledgeable about “all things sewer”. Our goal was not to stop development from occurring but to ensure that the citizens had a say in the destiny of their city.

Through conversations with the City Council, we were informed that the Met Council and the comprehensive plan have already determined the number of “toilet flushes necessary”. The Met Council said we can work with our City

Council to reach an agreement. The City Council said we can work with the Met Council. There seems to be a lack of accountability and transparency here. When active and engaged citizens are stepping up and standing up only to learn that all avenues to an alternate plan seem to be thwarted...then I say "Houston, we have a problem here". Our forefathers designed our government to operate from the bottom up. Not the top down. Government Of, By, and For the People.

I suggest a reduction in scope, power, and reach of the Met Council. A down-sizing. The Met Council in its present form is no longer functioning as it was intended. Outside of the boundaries of Minneapolis and St. Paul, the needs and desires of the citizens are quite different and should be addressed locally by the officials they elect. Cities should be allowed to grow as their citizens desire for their communities. We should not be mandated to provide 3 to 5 homes on 1-acre plots to meet Met Council requirements. The market and the citizens of the community should determine this in concert with their elected officials.

I am in favor of a council of governments selecting candidates from their own district who were already elected and are willing to serve. Alternatively, or in addition to, I suggest candidates who are chosen through a submittal of qualified applicants, that reside in that district and are chosen by the local council of governments. Or, as another alternative, if the task force is unable to agree upon a change model. May I suggest a weighted voting system that grants

an extra vote to each voting member in the district being impacted by the decision.

The Met Council wields far too much power and control with no real over-site, and needs to be reined in. It is my hope that the task force will put forth meaningful changes to the legislature for a new and improved governance structure to the Met Council.

Thank you for your time and consideration, and for the opportunity to provide input on governance changes for the Met Council.

Denise Peterson

January 16, 2024

Chair Hornstein, Vice Chair Pratt, and Members of the Metropolitan Governance Task Force:

Thank you for your time and commitment to considering the matter of Metropolitan Council governance. The City of Minneapolis would appreciate the Task Force taking the following comments into consideration.

Governance of the Metropolitan (Met) Council is a perennial topic and reflects the challenge of working across a region with diverse interests. Despite the differences that exist across the seven-county metro, we see great value in working together for the welfare of our region.

Questions or controversies around the Met Council have often surfaced around transportation planning and funding, but the Met Council carries out many other functions such as wastewater treatment, helping to address the region's housing needs, and maintaining regional parks. As you do your work, we ask that you are mindful of all the functions of the Met Council and potential impacts of any proposed changes.

We ask the Task Force to be mindful of circumstances that may trigger federal redesignation of the Met Council and to ascertain the implications of going through that process. The Met Council serves as a legally designated entity for planning and for the allocation of significant transportation funds. The impacts must be understood as the Task Force makes a recommendation.

We are aware of concerns about the transparency and accountability of the Met Council, and we share many of those concerns. Any changes to the Met Council should help ensure that Council Members have the time and resources to build and maintain relationships with the communities they represent.

Representation on the governing body of the Met Council should be proportional to city and county responsibility for land use, wastewater, community development, housing, parks and open space, transportation, and environmental protection. A combination of population and communities of interest (central cities, developed areas, and developing areas) should guide the apportionment of Council Members.

Population alone does not capture the unique roles, responsibilities, and contributions of the largest city in the region. Federal law governing Metropolitan Planning Organizations recognizes that the role of the largest city is unique, which is why redesignation requires the support of the largest city.

We appreciate the thoughtful dialogue that the Task Force has been having, and we look forward to further discussion.

Sincerely,



Katie Topinka  
Director, Intergovernmental Relations