



COUNCIL OF METROPOLITAN AREA LEAGUES

VOLUME 60 - ISSUE 2

DECEMBER 2023

HAPPY HOLIDAYS

Council of Metropolitan Area Leagues

Established in 1962 as an ILO and composed of the members of local LWVs in the seven metro counties Anoka, Carver, Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey, Scott and Washington

CMAL

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LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Here is a call to action to work on the CMAL watershed study!

Greetings to Metro Area League Members & Friends

CMAL will hold its next quarterly meeting on January 13, 2024 beginning at 10:00 AM via Zoom.

The January meeting will be a report on the CMAL Watershed Study thus far and we are hoping for participation from all 19 Metro Area Leagues - really, it's essential!

During the past few months, the study committee has researched Water in Minnesota, and we are slowly unraveling how watersheds seem to work. We have found that there are many different government entities that have a say in water use. This study may just be the "tip of the iceberg."

Watershed management entities are even more obscure than county government. They have the authority to tax, to regulate, to build and maintain structures. This CMAL study has the potential to shed a spotlight on how these entities work and to let them know that the League of Women Voters is trying to increase public knowledge of their work. This project is entirely educational in nature and not tied to any advocacy agenda, but who knows what the study might lead to.

If you remember our past studies on the Metropolitan Council and County Government, there was a questionnaire developed for teams of League members to use in their discussions with local and county governments. This is what we envision to do in this study as well.

There are 33 Watershed Districts/Water Management Organizations in our metro area. We have developed a table that links our 19 Leagues with these districts, and we are hoping that we have the membership needed to interview the majority of these organizations. We imagine that some Leagues might be tackling more than one organization, as they cross county and city boundaries. Maybe even having members cross their organizational lines.

Will we be able to complete a questionnaire for each of the 33 watershed entities? That is an ambitious goal for sure. Even if we are not able to research all 33, I am sure we will be able to shine a light on how they work and their importance to our precious water resources.

Warmly,
Karen

Karen Schaffer, Chair - Council of Metropolitan Area Leagues

OCTOBER 2023 QUARTERLY MEETING RECAP

Reva Chamblis, Vice Chair of the Met Council addressed CMAL at its October 14, 2023 Quarterly Meeting. Vice Chair Chamblis gave an interesting talk, highlighting both a general background about Met Council operations but also substantial detail about new transportation/transit funding enacted by the Minnesota Legislature in its recently concluded 2023 session.

Chamblis noted the importance of [Thrive MSP 2040](#), the regional development guide produced every ten years, which sets the policy foundations for transportation, water, regional parks housing and transportation, which was adopted in 2014 with the goal of building and maintaining a thriving metropolitan region. She highlighted the rebuilding of the post pandemic transit system and touched on the work in progress for the 2050 planning.

2023 Legislative Highlights

Transportation

This past session was busy and included the new, sustainable $\frac{3}{4}$ cent **Metro Sales Tax** for transportation, which started October 1, 2023 with the revenue being allocated as follows:

- 17% to metro counties for transportation projects
- 83% to the Met Council of which:
 - 5% is allocated to TAB (Transportation Advisory Board) driven projects and
 - 95% is allocated to Met Council for transit operations

These percentages of percentages may at first seem picayune. But, as Chamblis pointed out, the sales tax is expected to yield \$300,333 million in FY 2024, rising to \$493,730 million in FY 2027. Small percentages applied to such a large base yield a major funding source.

- The sales tax funds allocated to Met Council for transit operations come with multiple strings.
 - 95% of the 83% comes with 13 specific legislative requirements, including, by way of example, transit safety improvements, transit shelter replacements, zero emissions bus procurement, improvements to regular bus service levels, and operations/capital for Arterial Bus Rapid Transit.

This funding will eliminate the structural deficit in transit operations. It will also relieve property taxpayers in Hennepin and Ramsey Counties by substituting Met Council transit operations funding for transit subsidies previously paid to the Met Council by the Hennepin County and Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authorities.

- Hennepin County will save \$25 million per year in subsidies for the Green, Blue, Orange and NorthStar Lines.
- Ramsey County will save \$6 million/year in subsidies for the Green Line.
- The legislation also included the appropriation of \$72 million in capital funds for development of new Arterial Bus Rapid Transit projects (lines F, G, and H) and the Apple Valley Transit Station.
- The legislature also authorized the Met Council to exercise new bonding authority to fund fleet replacement and other smaller capital projects.

Chamblis' presentation included a good bit of history of transitway development in the metro area from 2004-2022, plus the vision for the system through 2030.

Chamblis also mentioned **TRIP (Transit Ridership Improvement Project)** commencing December 2023. TRIP will tackle the LRT fare evasion problem by utilizing civilian agents to issue administrative fines to fare evaders, to supplement the issuance of citations by sworn officers. Initially there will be 22 new agents checking fares. The authority for civilian issuance of administrative fines was a critical component of the 2023 legislation impacting metro transit operations.

Housing

Finally, not to be overlooked is the $\frac{1}{4}$ cent **Metro Sales Tax** for affordable housing. Of this $\frac{1}{4}$ cent:

- metro counties will receive 50%,
- cities will receive 25% and
- state programs will receive 25%.

State programs include rental assistance, building or rehabilitation of affordable housing units, reduction in home ownership disparities, and support of nonprofits working on affordable housing.

For further information contact Reva Chamblis, Vice Chair at reva.chamblis@metc.state.mn.us

BOARD HIGHLIGHTS

CMAL Board Highlights August-November 2023

- Finalized plans for October 14 Quarterly, to include presentation on 2023 legislative results for Met Council operations and short presentation on the CMAL watershed study.
- Lengthy discussion on next steps for watershed study, including plans to meet with BWSR for general backgrounding, identifying helpful websites for research, identifying the 33 entities that have watershed management responsibilities and development of a questionnaire to be rolled out at the January 13, 2024 quarterly meeting.
- Communications planning deferred.
- Plans finalized for December 1, 2023 CMAL Newsletter.

METROPOLITAN GOVERNANCE TASK FORCE HARD AT WORK

Pursuant to HF 2092 2nd Engrossment 93rd Legislature the Metropolitan Governance Task Force was established. It held its first meeting on August 9, 2023.

The task force must study and evaluate options to reform and reconstitute governance of the Metropolitan Council. The study must include an analysis of the costs and benefits of:

1. Direct election of members to the Metropolitan Council;
2. A combination of directly elected and appointed members to the Metropolitan Council;
3. A council of governments which would replace the current Metropolitan Council;
4. Reapportioning responsibilities of the Metropolitan Council to state agencies and local units of government;
5. Adoption of a home rule charter for governance of the Metropolitan Council; and
6. Any other regional governance approaches that are viable alternatives to the current structure of the Metropolitan Council.

Its recommendation to the Legislature is due February 1, 2024. The Legislative Coordinating Council (LCC) maintains a comprehensive webpage that includes video of all of the Task Force meetings, meeting minutes, PowerPoint presentations from the various speakers, and copies of written testimony submitted by members of the public.

<https://www.lcc.mn.gov/mgtf/>

The Task Force elected Rep. Frank Hornstein Chair and Sen. Eric Pratt Vice Chair. The full roster of members can be found here: <https://www.lcc.mn.gov/mgtf/members.html>

Task Force meetings to date have been dominated by presentations from various agencies and associations. The list of presenters and their topics is impressive:

- Citizens League (2016 Report on Metropolitan Council Governance).
- Office of Legislative Auditor (OLA) (2011 report on transit governance in the metro area).
- Metropolitan Council (describing its Community Development, Environmental Services and Transportation departments as well a budget presentation).
- Metro Transit (transit operations)
- Blue Ribbon Commission (2020 report on metro governance, which includes CMAL’s 2019 Study on Metropolitan Governance and new position).
- MnDOT (Metropolitan Planning Organizations [MPOs] in greater Minnesota).
- University of Minnesota (the nature and functions of MPOs).
- Metro Cities (regarding its Policy on Metro Governance).
- Portland Oregon Metropolitan Council (structure and functions).
- LCC (history of the Metropolitan Council).

Task Force members have questioned the presenters and also engaged in post-presentation discussions, although no specific proposals for reform have been proposed. A lot of discussion has centered on the question of the nature of the Metropolitan Council, and whether it is a state agency, special district, governmental unit, political subdivision, political corporation or some combination or variation.

The agenda for the September 13 meeting of the Task Force included an interesting chart dated September 2020, comparing the structure of various metropolitan governance agencies across the country.

Future Task Force meetings will include information about different regional governance models from around the country. In addition, four (4) public engagement evening meetings have been scheduled away from the Capitol: December 8 (St. Paul), December 14 (Lake Elmo), January 5 (U of M in Minneapolis) and January 9 (Scott County). These meetings are intended to allow for more public input into the Task Force process.

Meeting details can be found here: <https://www.lcc.mn.gov/mgtf/meetings.html>

SAVE THE DATES

January 13, 2024 Quarterly Meeting

March 9, 2024 Quarterly Meeting

May 11, 2024 Annual Meeting

All meetings begin at 10:00 AM

Watershed Study Preliminary Documents

The Watershed Study Committee has produced a draft Study Report, Questionnaire and Table linking the Watershed Districts and the Area Metro Leagues.

The Committee is looking for feedback relative to what might be missing from the Study Report or the Questionnaire. If you are interested in reviewing these documents and providing feedback to the Committee prior to the January Quarterly Meeting, please contact Karen Schaffer at schafferka@gmail.com to request these documents.

1. [Watershed Study Report](#)
2. [Questionnaire](#)
3. [Watershed/Leagues Table](#)

Topic: CMAL January Quarterly Meeting

Time: Jan 13, 2024 10:00 AM Central Time (US and Canada)

Click Here: [CMAL January Quarterly Meeting](#)

Meeting ID: 817 7207 3679

Passcode: 461494