

February 2021




BLUE RIBBON COMMITTEE

on the Metropolitan Council's Structure and Services



Executive Order 20-88

On August 28, 2020, Governor Tim Walz issued Executive Order 20-88, establishing the Blue Ribbon Committee on the Metropolitan Council's Structure and Services to review:

- The role of elected versus appointed Metropolitan Council Members
 - The Metropolitan Council's role as a Metropolitan Planning Organization
 - The effectiveness of the delivery of regional transit service
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BLUE RIBBON COMMITTEE Members

The Committee included a panel of civic, business, and academic leaders to provide for a broad range of input and expertise.


- Mary Liz Holberg, Dakota County Commissioner, District 6
- Peter Bell, Director, Schafer Richardson Realty Trust
- Patrick Born, Chair, Board of Directors of the Citizens League
- John (Jay) Cowles, Managing Director, Lawrence Creek, LLC
- James Hovland, Mayor, City of Edina
- Elizabeth Kautz, Mayor, City of Burnsville
- Douglas Loon, President, Minnesota Chamber of Commerce
- Mary Jo McGuire, Ramsey County Commissioner, District 2
- Khani Sahebjam, Chief Strategy Officer, SRF Consulting
- George Schember, VP, Cargill Transportation & Logistics
- Alene Tchourumoff, SVP for Community Development and the Center for Indian Country Development, Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis
- Thomas Weaver, CEO, Achieve Services
- Janet Williams, Mayor of Savage
- Pahoua Yang Hoffman, SVP, Community Impact, Saint Paul and Minnesota Foundation
- Zhirong (Jerry) Zhao, Professor and Director of the Master of Public Policy Program, University of Minnesota Humphrey School of Public Affairs



BLUE RIBBON COMMITTEE Timeline

The Committee met over a three-month period, collecting a broad range of input through open (virtual) meetings.


Information and testimony were received from:

- State legislative staff
 - State agency representatives
 - Metropolitan Council staff
 - Local government officials
 - Interested advocacy groups and civic organizations
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BLUE RIBBON COMMITTEE

Findings & Recommendations




The role of elected vs. appointed Council *Findings*

- Council Members should be appointed by the governor and not be directly elected to the Council.
 - Council Members should not be sitting local elected officials.
 - There is a lack of consensus and support among the region's local governments for a large structural reorganization or fundamental change to the Council.
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The role of elected vs. appointed Council *Recommendations*

- Provide in statute for staggered four-year Council Member terms.
 - Require in statute that the nominating committee be expanded and comprised of a majority of local elected officials.
 - Require in statute that the nominating committee recommend up to three finalists for each Council seat and that the names of finalists and their qualifications be publicly announced at least 14 days prior to final selection by the governor.
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Metropolitan Council's role as a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) *Findings*

- The Council is the legitimate regional Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO).
- The federal agencies are fully aware of, and in approval of the Council's status as the legal MPO.
- Re-designating the regional MPO would be a complex process.
- The Transportation Advisory Board is integral to the regional planning processes under long-standing protocol.




Metropolitan Council's role as a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)

Recommendations

- The Metropolitan Council and Transportation Advisory Board should require a super majority 3/5ths vote (60 percent) on federally required actions and recommendations from the TAB to the Council.
 - The Metropolitan Council and Transportation Advisory Board should consider eliminating the term “Advisory” in the board’s name.
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The effectiveness of the delivery of regional transit service *Findings*


- The necessary level of state and federally mandated Metro Mobility ADA service is substantially more expensive to provide than regular transit service and continues to see growing financial need.
 - The Committee recognizes that transit funding shortfalls have been an ongoing issue.
 - The Committee recognizes the value of local input that is part of the suburban transit provider model. However, the committee also recognizes that this model can lead to inefficiencies.
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The effectiveness of the delivery of regional transit service *Recommendations*

- The Governor and legislature should statutorily shift the Metro Mobility budget from a base general fund appropriation to a forecasted budget program based upon demand.
- The Committee urges the Governor and legislature to provide continued financial support to the regional transit system.
- The Council and its regional partners, Transportation Advisory Board, local governments, and transit providers should continue to cooperatively:
 - Seek long-term funding solutions
 - Evaluate transit governance options that support transit service efficiencies
 - Develop, adopt, and articulate agreed-upon regional transit service outcomes and measures



The effectiveness of the delivery of regional transit service *Recommendations*

- The Council and its regional partners, Transportation Advisory Board, local governments, and transit providers should continue to cooperatively:
 - Seek long-term funding solutions
 - Evaluate transit governance options that support transit service efficiencies
 - Develop, adopt, and articulate agreed-upon regional transit service outcomes and measures
 - The Council should contract for an efficiency and geographic equity study every five years to evaluate the regional transit system.
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Questions?