

# Metropolitan Council: What it is and what it does

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**FACTS FACTS FACTS FACTS FACTS**

The Metropolitan Council provides cost-effective transit and wastewater services, coordinates orderly and economic development, and assists communities as they plan for anticipated growth. The Council was established by the Minnesota Legislature in 1967.

The Council has jurisdiction in the seven-county Minneapolis-St. Paul region comprising Anoka, Carver, Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey, Scott and Washington Counties. The Council:

- Provides an average of 268,000 bus and rail rides each weekday.
- Collects and treats up to 250 million gallons of waste-water daily, protecting public health and the environment.
- Plans and helps fund a system of regional parks and trails – more than 53,000 acres in all.
- Provides affordable housing opportunities to households with low incomes.

The Council develops, in cooperation with local communities, the *2030 Regional Development Framework*, a set of policies to guide the efficient growth of the region and help maintain the region's economic competitiveness.

The Council carries out the *Framework*, in part, through its

plans for “regional systems” – transportation, airports, regional parks, and water resources.

Council staff is organized in three divisions that focus on transportation, the environment and community development, supported by administrative and service units.

## Governance

The Metropolitan Council has 17 members; they are appointed by and serve at the pleasure of the governor. Sixteen Council members represent geographic districts of roughly equal population across the region. The Council chair, the 17th member, serves at large.

The role of Council members is to provide a regional perspective and work toward a regional consensus on issues facing the metropolitan area. All meetings of the Council and its subcommittees are open to the public.

## Guiding principles

- Focus on our mission
- Balance regional needs with local concerns
- Maximize Council accountability
- Involve citizens

- Efficiently use current and future regional infrastructure, services and resources.
- Operate quality services in an inclusive, customer-focused and efficient manner.
- Encourage innovation to improve services and programs.

## 2008 achievements

- Attained the highest Metro Transit ridership since 1981, providing a total of 81.1 million bus and rail rides.
- Neared completion of preliminary engineering of Central Corridor light-rail transit, an 11-mile line between downtown St. Paul and downtown Minneapolis.
- With its partners, continued construction of facilities for Northstar, the region's first commuter-rail line, set to open in late 2009.
- Began construction and implementation of several projects designed to reduce congestion in the Cedar Avenue and I-35W corridors, supported by a \$183 million in federal and state grants.
- Maintained a perfect record of compliance with clean water

discharge permits at its eight wastewater treatment plants.

- Conducted research with the University of Minnesota on the potential use of algae as a renewable fuel source.
- Continued efforts to reduce fossil-fuel energy consumption in the wastewater treatment system.
- Developed a new groundwater model and regional water supply plan to help communities protect and ensure an adequate supply of drinking water for future generations.
- Celebrated, with Washington County, the opening of Big Marine Regional Park Reserve, more than 30 years in the making.
- Assisted metro area communities as they updated their comprehensive plans for submittal at the end of 2008.
- Assisted an average of 5,900 households monthly with federal housing choice vouchers, injecting \$54 million annually of federal, state and local funds into the regional economy.
- With its funding partners, created the Land Acquisition for Affordable New Development revolving loan fund, which provides loans to cities to buy land now for future affordable housing.
- Kept the regional property tax levy flat for the sixth consecutive year.

• **Livable Communities grant awards:**

- \$7 million to 12 projects that demonstrate land uses that connect housing, jobs and services in eight cities.
- \$8 million to communities to clean up polluted land for redevelopment.
- \$1.6 million to support affordable housing initiatives in six cities and one multi-community land trust.

**Finances**

The Council relies on several funding sources. In 2008, 42% of the Council’s revenue came from user fees for wastewater treatment and transit services, and 46% from state and federal funds. About 10% percent of revenue came from a seven-county property tax, and 2% from other sources.

The Council’s 2008 budget expenditures totaled \$700.9 million. The operating budget of \$482 million (69% of expenditures) covered daily expenses, mostly for regional transit service and wastewater treatment.

Debt service (20%) covered payments on the Council’s long-term capital bonds and loans. Pass-through monies (11%) came primarily from federal sources (and some state funds) that the Council received and allocated to local governments, agencies and rental property owners for

transportation, housing and other programs.

**For more information...**

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612-333-3373

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