



2012

## *Record of Accomplishment*

Charged with the “orderly and economical development of the region,” the Metropolitan Council continues the work of crafting a world-class region, second to none for its commitment to healthy and vibrant communities.

In 2012, the Metropolitan Council made advancements investing in development projects that promote jobs, support economic opportunity, and ensure housing affordability. The seven-county metropolitan area is well on its way toward building a 21st Century transit system; a network of rail and bus corridors that will create jobs, connect people with places, improve mobility, promote transportation choices, and encourage development near transit stations. This year, the Council launched the Thrive MSP 2040 initiative, working with partners and the public to fashion the region’s long-range plan for ensuring the region remains vital, prosperous, and competitive long into the future.

The Council’s 2012 accomplishments contribute to the State of Minnesota’s progress on four of the indicators that comprise the Minnesota Dashboard: economy, mobility, environment, and government.

# Minnesota Dashboard—Economy

A thriving economy that encourages business growth and employment opportunities

## COUNCIL COMPLETED 80 PERCENT OF CONSTRUCTION ON THE CENTRAL CORRIDOR LRT LINE, ADVANCING JOB CREATION, MOBILITY AND CONNECTIONS TO WORK

Central Corridor LRT service is on track to begin in 2014, thanks to the 2012 work on this 11-mile line between Saint Paul and Minneapolis. The \$957 million project, including nearly \$92 million from the state, **provided jobs for more than 4,300 construction workers** to date, exceeding the 3,400 jobs that were anticipated. With a payroll of \$250 million, CCLRT employs workers **from more than 60 Minnesota counties**.

The Council recognizes the challenges to local businesses on the corridor and continues to take steps to mitigate construction impacts. Working with project partners, the Council and other funders are providing \$11.1 million in assistance, including \$6 million in forgivable loans and grants. The Council also funded a \$1.2 million marketing campaign to attract customers to corridor businesses. To date, 143 small businesses have received loans. The value of funds approved since 2011 exceeds \$2 million.

## COUNCIL ESTABLISHED A SOUTHWEST LRT PROJECT OFFICE IN ST. LOUIS PARK, ADVANCING THE GOAL OF CONTINUING TO BUILD OUT A REGIONAL TRANSIT NETWORK AND PROMOTING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The 15-mile Southwest LRT (SWLRT) line between downtown Minneapolis and Eden Prairie is projected to provide **jobs for 3,800 workers**, with payroll expected to equal about a quarter of the project cost of \$1.25 billion. Southwest LRT will not only create engineering, construction, and operations jobs, but will serve the 270,000 jobs that will be located along the corridor by 2030.

In September 2012, Governor Dayton awarded \$2 million in funding from the Department of Employment and Economic Development, allowing the project to continue preliminary engineering into 2013. In October 2012, The White House affirmed support for SWLRT through its “We Can’t Wait” initiative, pledging to expedite environmental review processes.

## COUNCIL ESTABLISHES COLLABORATIVE PROCESS FOR THRIVE MSP 2040 TO PROVIDE FRAMEWORK FOR REGIONAL GROWTH AND PROSPERITY

Thrive MSP 2040 is the seven-county region’s long-range planning effort to provide a vision for the development and policy guidance for the year 2040. The goals of Thrive MSP 2040 include maximizing opportunities for growth and prosperity; creating a regional vision for everyone; and defining and achieving regional goals. The Council began development of Thrive MSP 2040 by engaging local officials, regional partners, and the public. During the first phase of Thrive MSP 2040 outreach, over 1,100 people participated in a variety of outreach forums. Outreach efforts sought to engage the community, including traditionally under-represented communities, at the beginning



stages of the planning process rather than after the policies are developed. In 2012, Thrive-related outreach included 12 community listening sessions as well as an innovative online idea-gathering tool to foster discussion of the Thrive MSP 2040 plan throughout its development. Work on the plan will continue with additional engagement opportunities for the public and stakeholders in 2013, with final approval in 2014. Once approved, this framework will help guide local development throughout the region.

## COUNCIL SUPPORT OF CORRIDORS OF OPPORTUNITY CONTRIBUTES TO REGION'S VITALITY

The Corridors of Opportunity initiative, now in its second year and more than halfway through its grant period, supports development along transitway corridors to guide our region's growth, vitality, and competitiveness. This initiative strives to ensure access to jobs, housing, and essential services along transitways for residents of all incomes and backgrounds.

In 2012, Corridors of Opportunity continued to engage underrepresented communities and raise awareness of the potential benefit of transitway development in these communities. Corridors of Opportunity funded transit-oriented development (TOD) projects along Hiawatha, Central, and Southwest LRT corridors. These investments **leverage additional financing and will result in the creation of over 1,800 jobs, 1,000 housing units, including 368 affordable housing units, and over \$210 million in additional investments.**

Further, in 2012, the Council embarked on a "TOD Strategic Action Plan" to determine how to build on its past success and add value in the region toward increasing the quality and quantity of TOD in the region.

## COUNCIL AWARDS FUNDS FOR BROWNFIELD CLEANUP FOR JOB CREATION, AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT

The Council annually allocates Livable Communities monies to fund projects that enhance opportunities for affordable housing, brownfield cleanup for redevelopment and job creation, and models of mixed-use development. This year, the Council continued a new category of grants, begun last year, for Transit Oriented Development, or "TOD" projects. During the first round of TOD awards, 24 awards totaling \$15.3 million were made to leverage investment in light rail transit, high-frequency bus routes and bus rapid transit by assisting projects that will provide jobs and housing near those regional assets.

With some grants still under review, the Council expects to **award an additional \$23 million in 2012 through the regular and TOD grant categories**, furthering job creation. Since the legislature established the Livable Communities Demonstration Account in 1995, the Council awarded \$245million via 715 grants, building or rehabilitating over 4,000 affordable housing units, cleaning up more than 2,000 acres of polluted metro area land, creating or retaining more than 37,000 jobs and leveraging billions of dollars in other investment.





## COUNCIL KEEPS SEWER RATES COMPETITIVE AND BELOW PEER AGENCIES NATIONWIDE

The Metropolitan Council Environmental Services (MCES) division, a wholesaler of sewer services to 106 municipalities in the seven-county area, charged an average wholesale rate of \$139 per household in 2010. These Twin Cities area municipalities then charged, on average, a retail rate of \$216 per household in 2010. In a triennial survey done by the National Association of Clean Water Agencies (NACWA), this \$216 retail sewer rate compares favorably to an average rate of \$334 reported by 97 agencies and to an average rate of \$393 reported by 24 peer agencies (those that treat more than 100 million gallons of wastewater per day).

## Minnesota Dashboard—Mobility

**Sustainable options to safely move people, goods, services, and information**

### TRANSIT RIDERSHIP GROWS; ON TRACK TO MEET LONG-TERM GOALS

In 2012, transit ridership is expected to climb to **94 million rides**, marking an overall system increase of three percent when taking into account all regional transit services (Metro Transit, suburban service, contracted service, and ADA service). For Metro Mobility alone, the service for people with disabilities, in January through August 2012, ridership has increased 9.62 percent over 2011, with 1.5 million rides projected for 2012.

Growing ridership represents increased mobility and access to jobs, schools, services, and community resources. Furthermore, transit improves mobility for all transportation system users by reducing congestion on roads. The 2012 State of the Commute Survey found that 24 percent of the roughly 1.55 million commuters in the metro area use an alternative to driving alone each day which helps take cars off the road, and transit plays an important role in providing commuters with this option. For example, on the I-394 MnPASS westbound at Penn Ave, a total of 4,805 people were moved by transit in the afternoon peak period. This equates to about 1.4 lanes of traffic if those riders drove cars during their afternoon commute instead of riding transit.

Overall, an estimated 94 million transit rides will **reduce commuter delays in the Twin Cities metro by about 6 million hours and save the region about \$140 million in congestion costs in 2012** compared to 2008. Eighty percent of these trips are for work and school, meaning that in 2012, over metropolitan area riders used transit to connect to jobs and get to class 75 million times. Beyond making traveling faster and efficient, transit is an environmentally friendly form of mobility. The estimated 2012 transit ridership means consuming roughly 6 million fewer gallons of fuel thereby emitting 122 million fewer tons of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.



## STUDENT PASS PROGRAM MAKES TRANSIT ACCESSIBLE TO YOUTH

In fall 2012, ridership grew thanks to a new partnership with Minneapolis Public Schools that expanded the Student Pass program to more than 3,600 Minneapolis high school students. Students use the passes to get to and from school as well as to academic programs, athletics, jobs, and other activities beyond the school day, all while using existing transit routes. The Student Pass program means that high school students' transportation options are expanded beyond regular school hours and are not limited to traditional school bus service, thereby expanding opportunities for students to find jobs, participate in extracurricular activities, and benefit from a variety of community resources beyond their immediate neighborhoods.

## MORE TRANSIT FACILITIES TO SERVE MORE COMMUTERS

In 2012, Metro Transit made significant progress on three new major transit facilities. The three facilities will provide expanded bus and rail service for hundreds of Twin Cities commuters. Opening in November 2012, the Ramsey Station will be the sixth suburban station on the Northstar line. The Ramsey Station will provide hundreds of daily connections for commuters, including veterans accessing the new Northwest Metro VA Outpatient Clinic. In Little Canada, a new 280-space Park & Ride lot will provide new express bus service to downtown Minneapolis and express and local bus service to downtown Saint Paul. In the east metro, an expansion of the 1,000-space Park & Ride and transit center at Maplewood Mall was nearly completed in 2012 and will open in early 2013. This station will provide daily express bus to the downtowns and University of Minnesota.

## COUNCIL'S UPDATED *TRANSPORTATION PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING GUIDE* PROVIDES CLEAR FRAMEWORK FOR STRENGTHENING THE REGION'S TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

In 2012, the Council updated the *Transportation Planning and Programming Guide* for the first time since 1996. The guide provides a clear framework for securing and expanding the transportation system throughout the seven-county metropolitan area. In order to maintain and improve mobility for the metropolitan area, the transportation planning process involves an interconnected group of transportation officials and transportation agencies, relying on plans made by the federal government, the state, counties, cities and other transportation partners. The *Transportation Planning and Programming Guide* explains the participants that create and maintain the Twin Cities transportation system, how those participants work together, the primary products and processes that define their work, the sources and allocation of funds to transportation projects, how plans become programmed projects, and the activities that support planning and programming.





# Minnesota Dashboard—Environment

## Clean, healthy environment with sustainable uses of natural resources

### COUNCIL PROTECTS PUBLIC HEALTH AND THE ENVIRONMENT; AWARDED FOR PERFECT DISCHARGE COMPLIANCE AT SEVERAL PLANTS

Metropolitan Council Environmental Service (MCES) division treats an average of 260 million gallons of wastewater every day from more than two million residents. To put this volume of wastewater into perspective, it would be enough to fill the Metrodome in about a day and a half. The real impact comes in returning this amount of clean water to the environment every day, where it can be re-used continually. Five MCES wastewater treatment plants earned the National Association of Clean Water Agencies (NACWA) Platinum Award for five years or more of perfect discharge permit compliance: Hastings (21 years); St. Croix Valley (20 years); Seneca (11 years); Blue Lake (6 years); and Eagles Point (6 years). Additionally, the Council protects the region's vital environmental resources, such as the Mississippi River, through its river monitoring program. The river monitoring program began in 1927 after the Mississippi River was declared a public health hazard. Today the river monitoring program serves a wide array of needs, including determining whether the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area waters meet state water quality standards, the effectiveness of MCES treatment plants, and long-term trends in water quality.

### COUNCIL'S ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES DIVISION RECEIVES AWARD FOR ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Thanks to long-range planning by MCES, energy consumption continues to decrease. MCES collects and treats wastewater at its seven regional treatment plants. Getting the wastewater to the plants and then processing it uses massive amounts energy – approximately \$15 million of energy per year. In 2012, MCES continued improving energy savings by embarking on numerous projects, such as decommissioning outdated, inefficient facilities, redesigning lighting, improving HVAC systems, and installing new equipment to offset electricity and natural gas usage. With the addition of these 2012 improvements, **MCES's energy savings initiatives will save nearly \$4 million a year compared to 2006 energy use.** These operating cost savings mean lower wastewater rates to the cities and industrial users. Because of these cost-saving measures, Xcel Energy recently named MCES its 2012 "Xcel Energy Efficiency Partner".

### COUNCIL INVESTS IN CONSERVING ENERGY AND SAVING MONEY IN TRANSIT

Metro Transit's Go Greener Initiative and facilities improvements continue to result in significant energy savings. Metro Transit improved the fuel economy of its fleet of nearly 900 buses 11.7 percent from 2007 to today. Through the first three quarters of 2012 alone, Metro Transit has conserved an estimated 600,000 gallons of fuel compared to 2007 operations, saving **\$2.1 million dollars.** This savings is the result of a number of operational and fleet improvements associated with Metro Transit's energy-saving Go Greener initiative. These include specifying lighter materials and energy-efficient



components in new bus procurements, changes in engine design, the addition of 97 hybrid-electric buses to Metro Transit service and operational changes and policy measures designed to reduce idling.

A comprehensive 2008 energy audit conducted with Xcel Energy led Metro Transit to invest in improvements such as automated building controls, high efficiency lighting, air quality sensors, demand based ventilation, and high-speed insulated bay doors to conserve energy and reduce utility costs at its six bus facilities. In comparison to the 2008 baseline, utility costs have been cut in half and the agency expects to realize a savings of over \$2 million in 2012.

## REGIONAL PARKS CONTINUE TO BE TOP METRO-AREA ATTRACTION

Regional parks continue to be a popular destination in the metro area. In fact, the number of annual visits to regional parks continues to grow, reaching nearly 44 million in 2011 – more than the annual number of visits to the Mall of America. The Council’s investment in parks helps protect sensitive areas of the region’s environment. In 2012, several projects were financed with \$4,586,000 of 2012 State bond appropriations for Regional Parks and \$2,599,000 of matching Metropolitan Council bonds. The State bonds and Council funds were used for construction projects and **created approximately 111 construction jobs in 2012.**

## Minnesota Dashboard—Government


**Efficient and accountable government services**

### COUNCIL IMPLEMENTS INNOVATIVE TECHNOLOGY TO IMPROVE OPERATIONS

Metro Transit and MCES continue to incorporate innovative technologies to improve operational performance and to increase the sustainable use of natural resources. In 2012, MCES completed two major projects: converting a solids handling process to renewable biogas at the Blue Lake Plant and optimizing steam use at the Metro Plant. Using renewable biogas at the Blue Lake Plant will **save approximately \$600,000 annually in natural gas costs.** By installing anaerobic digesters, the plant can produce biogas, offsetting natural gas by approximately 960,000 therms annually, equivalent to the natural gas usage of approximately 818 Minnesota homes. Optimizing steam use at the Metro Plant will yield a **\$200,000 savings annually in electricity costs.** By installing a non-condensing steam electric turbine and managing steam use, this improvement recovers approximately 3 million kWh annually, approximately 500 Minnesota households’ worth of electricity.

Like Environmental Services, Metro Transit employs cutting-edge technology to improve operations while reducing natural resource consumption. In 2012, Metro Transit introduced two industry-leading, next-generation hybrid-electric buses to the Twin Cities at the Minnesota State Fair. Systems on these buses – including the air compressor, heating and cooling and power steering – are run directly from the hybrid’s powerful





battery, resulting in additional fuel savings, reduced emissions, and other benefits. The new bus model also can operate in all-electric mode, providing whisper-quiet, emission-free travel for short durations. Eighty percent of the cost of the buses was covered by a federal grant won through a competitive process. Also in 2012, the new CCLRT or “Green Line” light rail vehicles started to arrive. Manufactured in the United States, the new light rail vehicles (LRV) vehicles are even lighter than current LRVs, reducing the amount of energy need to power the light rail line.

#### COUNCIL MAINTAINED SOUND FISCAL MANAGEMENT

Due to the Council’s strong bond ratings, in 2012, the Council refinanced bonds that will lead to **a net savings to future taxpayers and wastewater ratepayers of \$42 million** in present value over the life of the bonds. The savings for the October 2012 refinancing of transit capital and wastewater bonds alone is \$15 million in today’s dollars. Both Standard & Poor’s and Moody’s reaffirmed the Council’s Triple-A rating for the bond refinancing. Both rating agencies stated that the highest possible ratings are justified because of the region’s strong and diverse economic foundation and the Council’s history of strong management practices. The original bond sale proceeds pay for transit capital expenses, such as new bus purchases; and also for wastewater construction projects, such as treatment plant upgrades, and interceptor construction and rehabilitation.