

COMMUNITIES

1. Supporting METRO Green Line businesses

To mitigate construction impacts to local businesses, the Council and other funders provided \$11.1 million in assistance, including \$6 million in forgivable loans and grants, to 200 businesses that showed a loss in sales due to construction.

The Council also funded a \$1.2 million marketing campaign to attract customers to corridor businesses before Green Line service begins. University Avenue has seen a net gain of businesses.

2. Livable Communities grants support job creation, affordable housing and transit-oriented development

In 2013, the Council expects to award up to \$17.5 million in 2013 through Livable Communities grants.

Since 1995, the Council has awarded 787 grants totaling \$271 million to build or rehabilitate more than 18,000 affordable housing units and clean up more than 2,100 acres of polluted land, creating or retaining more than 40,000 jobs and leveraging billions of dollars in other investment.

3. Transit Police Grow and Become More Diverse to Better Serve Communities

Nineteen new full-time and 48 new part-time officers were sworn in as Metro Transit Police officers through October of 2013, significantly increasing the size of the department.

Five new Community Service Officers from diverse cultural backgrounds reflect the communities served by transit.

The department was restructured to support community-based policing, enabling individual officers to become more familiar with transit customers and employees in their areas.

PARKS

4. Parks Continue to be a Top Metro Attraction

Regional parks continue to be a popular destination in the metro area. The number of annual visits to regional parks grew 4% from 2011 to 2012, reaching 45.8 million in 2012—more than the 40 million annual visits to the Mall of America.

5. Park and Trail Investments Create Jobs

The Council's investment in parks helps protect sensitive areas of the region's environment.

In 2013, the Council approved \$7.8 million in grants to acquire 700 new acres for future parkland. These grants were financed with \$4.7 million of State funds and \$3.1 million of Metropolitan Council bonds, and matched with \$3.9 million by the regional park implementing agencies.

30 regional park and trail rehabilitation and construction projects were financed with \$14.58 million of FY 2014 Parks and Trails Legacy Fund appropriations. These projects are projected to create approximately 225 construction jobs.

TRANSPORTATION

6. First Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Line Launched

The Council led partnering agencies in the successful launch of the METRO Red Line, extending 11 miles south to connect Apple Valley, Eagan and Bloomington with the METRO Blue Line (Hiawatha LRT) at Mall of America. The line expects to grow from a current weekday average ridership of 815 to 1,600 riders by 2017.

7. Transit Ridership Remains Strong

2013 annual regional transit ridership is projected to remain at 2012 levels - 94 million - the second highest number in a generation.

8. Northstar Ridership on the Rise

A trial \$1 fare reduction on the Northstar commuter rail line, combined with new customers from Ramsey Station (opened November 2012), resulted in double-digit ridership growth in 2013. Eight of nine months had seen year-over-year ridership gains in the double-digits. Service includes complimentary onboard Wi-Fi service.

9. East Metro Service Improvements

Customers of eight local bus routes in St. Paul and eastern suburbs enjoyed improvements in trip frequency, additional evening and weekend service and/or new trips running earlier and later in the service day. Operational savings – largely due to fuel conservation efforts – were used to fund the east metro bus service expansion.

10. Park & Ride Options Expanded

Maplewood Mall Transit Center and Park & Ride facility was expanded in July, doubling the number of spaces from 500 to 1,000. A new ramp to the site provides covered parking for most spaces and a climate-controlled lobby area.

11. Metro Mobility and Transit Link Dial-a-Ride Enhancements

The 7,000 daily riders of Metro Mobility and Transit Link Dial-A-Ride services can now receive automated real-time information prior to their ride pick-up time through calls, emails or texts, thanks to the new Automatic Vehicle Locator (AVL) system. The system frees Metro Mobility staff to book rides for customers, rather than providing ride information updates.

The system enables greater efficiency in routing and service delivery, and improved information for drivers, including turn-by-turn directions and up-to-the-minute updates on route changes.

WASTEWATER & WATER

12. Saving Energy and Money

The Council's Environmental Services (MCES) division saved \$4 million in 2013 energy purchases for wastewater treatment, compared to 2006. The savings result in lower wastewater rates for city and industrial customers, as well as significant environmental benefits.

MCES is continuing its energy conservation and renewable energy projects that generate energy to be used onsite. In 2014, a new solar facility at the Blue Lake Wastewater Treatment Plant, will continue reducing energy purchases.

13. Keeping Sewer Rates Competitive

MCES provides wastewater treatment services to 107 municipalities in the seven-county area at wholesale rates. Those municipalities then bill the households and businesses within their boundaries for the wastewater treatment services they received, at an average annual rate of \$235.

This \$235 retail sewer rate compares favorably to an average rate of \$334 reported by 97 agencies in a 2011 survey by the National Association of Clean Water Agencies (NACWA),

14. Protecting Public Health and the Environment

MCES treats approximately 250 million gallons of wastewater from more than two million residents daily -- enough to fill the Metrodome in about a day and a half.

This cleaned water is returned to our rivers for re-use. Six MCES wastewater treatment plants earned national awards for five+ years or more of perfect discharge permit compliance: Hastings (22 years); St. Croix Valley (21 years); Seneca (12 years); Blue Lake (7 years); Eagles Point (7 years); and Empire (5 years).

15. Seeking Solutions to Water Supply Issues

Through partnerships with local communities and government agencies, the Council's water supply studies and projects seek to ensure that regional water supplies can support current and future generations.

The projects will support community efforts to protect and manage water supplies and prevent further degradation of water sources in the metropolitan area. The Council's water supply efforts will help identify high-priority areas for protecting groundwater, and will support communities' efforts to preserve groundwater recharge areas.

HOUSING

16. Metro HRA awarded for efficient and effective housing services

Metro HRA earned the highest ranking possible from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for the ninth straight year for calendar year 2012.

This ranking system measures and grades housing agencies that administer the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program. Together, Metro HRA landlords and program participants ensured effective and efficient service which enables the Council to maximize the number of households served.

17. Supporting Homeless Veterans

Sixty-five homeless, low-income disabled veterans and families receive rent assistance for stable and safe housing through a unique program which combines HRA rental assistance with Veteran's Affairs (VA) case management and clinical services. The program is a three-way partnership with the VA, Metro HRA and veterans.

PLANNING

18. Thrive MSP 2040: Providing 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.

In 2013, the Council engaged communities and stakeholders throughout the region in more than 100 conversations about *Thrive MSP 2040*. The final policy language will be released for public comment in early 2014, with final adoption in late spring 2014. A public participation plan will accompany the *Thrive* document and will apply to all the planning efforts facilitated by the Metropolitan Council.

Thrive MSP 2040 will guide the systems and policy plans that detail how the Thrive policies will be implemented by the Council and local communities throughout the region.

19. Key Transportations Studies Completed in 2013

The Transportation Policy Plan (TPP) is the region's long range transportation plan, covering highways, transit and aviation. In 2013 the Council initiated work to extend its 2030 Transportation Policy Plan to 2040, developing goals and objectives for a performance-based plan and conducting two innovative studies: a Regional Bicycle System Study and a Highway Transitway Corridor Study.

- Regional Bicycle System Study defines the first Regional Bicycle Transportation Network which can be developed to encourage more use of bicycles for transportation.
- The Highway Transitway Corridor Study to determine the feasibility of providing fast, frequent, cost-effective all-day service connecting regional nodes in high demand corridors.

The Council also completed the Travel Behavior Inventory, a comprehensive set of surveys conducted every ten years. Key findings: overall daily per-person travel has declined since 2000; the share of trips being taken by transit and non-motorized mode has increased; and, the significance of non-commute travel in the region was affirmed.

20. Corridors of Opportunity Contributes to Region's Vitality

Corridors of Opportunity (CoO) supports development along transitway corridors to enhance our region's growth, vitality and competitiveness. Over the past three years, CoO helped improve access to jobs, housing and essential services along transitways for residents of all incomes and backgrounds.

19 grants to community-based organizations from historically underrepresented communities helped involve 23,000 people become meaningfully involved in transit, land use and economic development issues.

2014 work will continue aligning resources and programs among partners toward developing a shared vision of an equitable and prosperous region. A new Office of Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) in Metro Transit will partner with local governments and developers to facilitate TOD at transit stations.

ONGOING OPERATIONS IMPROVEMENTS

21. Streamlining processes

In 2013, the Council implemented electronic processing of compliance documents for solicitations and procurements.

The system will save approximately \$70,000 and 2,080 hours of staff time annually, reducing document processing from 10 days to 12 hours. The system eliminates the need to hire additional staff to track documents and saves countless of hours of current staff trying to track documents.

Faster processing allows contractors and vendors to continue working on a constant basis, keeping procurement costs down. The Council continues to prepare additional forms for electronic routing.

22. Increasing the micro-purchase limit.

The Council increased the micro-purchase level from \$2,500 to \$5,000 this year. Micro-purchases don't require obtaining quotes prior to the purchase of goods or services.

This improvement will save nearly 4,700 staff hours and more than \$69,150 in labor — eliminating the need to hire one purchasing agent. It will also result in much greater use of the Council's electronic Purchasing Cards (P-Cards), increasing the Council's P-Card rebate from \$30,000 to potentially \$90,000.