

**2016 State of the Region Address**  
***Partnerships as a Path to Prosperity***  
(Remarks as prepared for delivery)

**Adam Duininck, Metropolitan Council Chair**  
**Feb. 11, 2016 - Burnsville**

Good morning and welcome to Burnsville!

I'm so pleased to be here with you, at the beautiful Ames Center. I want to thank Mayor Kautz for her warm welcome today and for hosting us in her City.

I also want to thank Council Member Steve Chavez for his kind introduction and his service as a Council Member. His dedication and willingness to build partnerships in his district epitomizes the high caliber of Council Members who I'm proud to serve with. I would ask the Metropolitan Council Members here today to stand and be recognized at this time.

It is another beautiful day in the region! Today I want to take some time and reflect on the past year and how much we have accomplished together, in partnership, and I want to look forward to a future that will be determined by the innovative collaboration and problem solving that we as regional leaders choose to undertake.

I've been Chair of the Metropolitan Council for just over a year. When I stepped into this role, I received a lot of invitations, a lot of advice, and some constructive criticism. Mayors in Carver County wanted to show me their cities' development and transportation needs; local elected officials in Washington County wanted to better understand the Council's role in water supply planning; in Anoka County, officials wanted to talk about challenges like suburban poverty and rail safety; and the Dakota County board had questions about the Council's recently adopted policy plans. I also spent time meeting with and hearing from city and county representatives in Hennepin and Ramsey Counties.

Ultimately, they all wanted to talk with me about the Metropolitan Council's role in helping them achieve their goals.

For me, this is about **partnerships**. The Council unquestionably needed to strengthen its relationships with the elected leaders and the communities we directly impact, which is why building those partnerships has been and will continue to be a top priority for me.

**Partnerships in many forms**

Partnership takes many forms, but I've found that the Council is and should be primarily engaged in three types of partnership. The first is a collaborative partnership.

We can point to a number of extraordinary collaborative partnerships right here south of the river in Burnsville, Apple Valley and Eagan.

In Burnsville I spent some time with Mayor Kautz learning about the development of the Heart of the City and the vision that her community has been working toward in her time here.

The city of Eagan recently received recognition for the innovative planning and visioning work they are embarking on with their residents. It's a great reminder that regional planning and local planning can and must go hand-in-hand. I want to thank Mayor Mike Maguire for his leadership.

Last spring I attended Mayor Mary Hamann-Roland's State of the City address in Apple Valley. In it, she described the relationship between their successful businesses and the school district's need for more Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math students. The mayor also talked about the partnerships between area businesses like Uponor, the city's residents, Apple Valley's elected leaders and their planning department and how they have been able to maximize the Red Line BRT investment in their area. According to a recent study, Dakota County found that the BRT investment has yielded over \$270 million since 2010 including 38 projects in Apple Valley and Eagan.

That type of **collaborative partnership** – of bringing many stakeholders to the table to work in cooperation – is certainly one that the Met Council believes in and employs.

For me, working in collaboration is also about relationships. It sounds basic but I can't tell you how significant it has been for the Council to have a full-time chair to focus on this part of the job. It's a big region, and the Council interacts with so many people and elected leaders on a daily basis. It's important for them to hear from me directly, and more importantly, that I am out listening to what is happening across the region.

When it comes to **engagement partnership**, the Council's role is about providing resources and support, and engaging communities to understand what their aspirations are and how we can help them get there.

It is the Metropolitan Council's job to care about the success of every community in this region. But why should leaders in Blaine or Brooklyn Park, Stillwater or Savage, Anoka or Afton actively support the success of other cities in the region?

We should all care because the success of each city is a success for all of us in the region. A thriving region is built on the foundation of many strong communities.

We've long understood in our metropolitan region that challenges are not confined to city boundaries and county lines. It's this very idea that is at the root of why the Met Council was formed in 1967, nearly 50 years ago.

The Council was created in part to address a crisis of contaminated lakes and rivers. Today, our region reaps the benefits of a regional approach to water while our fellow

Americans in places like California and Flint, Michigan experience problems with poor water quality and low water supply that can be traced back to lack of governmental partnership and accountability.

In addition to water, there were a number of other critical issues emerging back in 1967 that were bigger than any one community: the expansion of the highway system, the need for preservation of our open space for parks and recreational use, a deteriorating transit system and a clear lack of affordable housing options.

What our leaders realized is that we were at a crossroads in deciding whether we wanted to be a major league metropolitan area or not.

This brings me to the third type of partnerships I want to highlight: the **partnerships that help us compete as a region**.

My strong passion and belief in regionalism is one of the reasons I am standing here today. I know that planning, operating, and working together at a regional level is needed now more than ever. With so many significant challenges, I believe that we will only move our region forward if we continue to work in collaboration, to authentically engage, and to develop new partnerships with regionalism guiding our decisions.

### **Partnership through collaboration**

I'm always proud when I get to share with people that our region has some of the most affordable wastewater treatment rates in the country. It's a well-kept secret. Our Environmental Services philosophy is "One Water" – a philosophy that acknowledges that groundwater, surface water, wastewater treatment, and the water quality of our lakes, streams, and rivers are all linked.

When it comes to water, I have been clear that the Metropolitan Council is one of many stakeholders.

Rather than see this as a challenge, I see it as an asset. It means different approaches to solving a problem. It means there are many ways to hold one another accountable. It means working cooperatively to realize cost savings, energy efficiencies, and having a shared self-interest.

Over the next several years the Council will spend about \$130 million annually to continue the upkeep of our regional wastewater interceptors and treatment plants. To make these investments as efficient as possible, we are collaborating with many communities.

Our Environmental Services staff recently partnered with industrial water users to design an incentive program. Through that program, we are encouraging area industries to pretreat their dirty water on-site first, instead of sending massive amounts of industrial dirty water to our regional treatment plants.

This program saves money for the region. We reduce energy consumption at our treatment plants and eliminate the need for expensive plant expansions.

The issues around affordable wastewater infrastructure, water quality, and sustainability will not get any easier in the coming years. Partnerships with private industry, local governments, state agencies, and the legislature and Governor will continue to be crucial. I'm looking forward to participating in the Governor's Water Summit later this month, to ensure that future generations have the same reliable and affordable access to clean water that we have today.

This type of collaborative partnership allows us to be good stewards of public resources – not just taxpayer dollars, but of our natural resources as well. Our wastewater system consistently achieves near-perfect compliance with state and federal water standards and we do so while holding rates 40% below the national average.

We took another important step forward this past year partnering with Xcel Energy, SunEdison and Oak Leaf Energy to open a solar garden at the Blue Lake Wastewater plant in Shakopee. The solar garden will provide savings to 300,000 customers in the southwest metro area. It would not have been possible without a \$2 million grant from Xcel's Renewable Development Fund. I know Chris Clark, Regional President of Xcel Energy is here today and I want to thank you for Xcel's strong commitment to our public-private partnership.

Our future is filled with more opportunities to collaborate as we explore ways to incorporate green options for transit needs, like solar-powered operations, as well as electric buses.

## **Partnership through engagement**

I spent much of my first year focused on strengthening and building relationships. As I listened to local leaders, it was clear they wanted more support, more technical assistance, and more resources as they shape the growth and development of their communities. As I start my second year as Chair, this focus will certainly continue.

As communities embark on the 2040 planning cycle, the Council is responding to requests for support and resources, and engaging more than ever before. Last year, we made more resources available online, and with our recently updated *Local Planning Handbook*, we are providing easy access to industry-best practices in order to make the process as simple as possible.

For communities who are most in need, the Council has approved \$1.8 million in planning grants for them to help offset the cost of updating their plans. We will also offer direct mapping services to smaller communities and launch a series of training workshops to bring learning opportunities directly to community planners.

One of the key issues facing communities right now is how to promote housing options that give people in all life stages and of all economic means viable choices for safe, reliable and affordable homes.

Last year the Council, which operates the largest Housing Choice voucher program in the metro region, launched our Community Choice Program. Community Choice is based on our commitment to equity and a conviction that the region is stronger when residents have access to real opportunities to live in communities that provide possibilities for success, prosperity and quality of life.

Through this program, families receive pre-move counseling, including financial literacy training and goal-setting, housing search assistance, and post-move counseling to ensure success in their new neighborhoods. The program outreach efforts began late last year – while the program is still in its infancy, we are already working with 45 families. I want to thank our Community Development Committee and Chair Gary Cunningham for his leadership, as well as the Community Development and HRA team who has put this idea into action.

Community Choice would not have come together without the Council's dedication to partnerships. It has taken diligent engagement by participating landlords, city and community leaders, philanthropic and non-profit partners, and the families of our region to get this program off the ground, and we're excited to see more families thrive.

I know there is disagreement about how best to invest in affordable housing. We need to move away from the false choice that is often presented: whether we invest in communities to revitalize neighborhoods or whether residents should leave their chosen communities for so-called high opportunity areas to find housing, and to access jobs and amenities.

It's not an either-or question. Our goal at the Metropolitan Council is to advocate for choices – for our region's residents to live where they choose. We must actively pursue both pathways to prosperity and invest in places equitably, so that we're providing real choices to families in our region.

One of the biggest challenges our region faces is the lack of affordable housing, particularly multifamily housing. I'm proud that in 2014 the Governor and Minnesota Legislature invested \$100 million in affordable housing. I'm pleased to see an additional \$90 million in the Governor's state bonding proposal this spring.

As the demand for affordable housing grows, funding for affordable housing at the state and federal level has continued to drop. Cities, counties, lawmakers, service providers, the development community and other key stakeholders will have to be creative, nimble and willing to work in collaboration if we are going to meet the growing need for safe, affordable homes in vibrant and diverse communities across the region.

The Council's Housing Policy Plan is helping build those partnerships by assisting all communities as they develop a full range of housing options, including affordable

housing. Our Housing Policy Plan is the first housing-only plan in nearly 30 years and guides this work.

### **Partnership through regionalism**

When I was in Seattle last fall with the Minneapolis and St. Paul Regional Chambers Leadership Visit, a prominent local elected leader said to me: “You have an asset in your region — your parks and open spaces. Keep investing in it. Expand it and maintain it, because it will be a competitive advantage for you in the future to have that kind of amenity for your residents.”

We are fortunate to have beautiful parks and open spaces in our region. Our regional park system covers nearly 55,000 acres and includes more than 340 miles of interconnected trails.

And clearly this asset is no secret. Our parks are nationally renowned for their beauty and greatness. The high-quality parks did not happen without deliberate leadership and partnerships that span the communities of our region.

The Council has the responsibility of developing and funding a long-range vision for our regional parks. We work in partnership with the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission, Regional Park implementing agencies, local communities, and state partners to care for and expand the regional parks system, to provide a connected regional park and trail network that promotes access and equitable use for all.

This partnership is unlike any other in the nation, and I think, a shining example of the type of regional success we can attain when we partner with a regional vision in mind.

### **Equity as a path to a strong region**

While there are many strengths that help us compete as a region, we also have huge shortcomings that hold our region back.

Much like our parks, our disparities are no secret. Year after year we hear about the gap between white people and people of color, and how those gaps continue to widen whether in home ownership, income, unemployment or educational outcomes.

These racial disparities are shameful and unacceptable. They don't reflect the type of community I want to raise my children in, nor the values that ground my life as a Minnesotan.

But these disparities aren't just immoral. They hold us all back from being a stronger, more vibrant region.

Equity is the superior growth model. It is a priority I want the Council to be focused on every day, in all the things we do, whether housing, parks, or our own internal policies.

At the Council we have made progress toward a workforce that reflects the communities we serve. In the last four years the Council moved from having 27% employees of color to 31%. In that same time period we moved from 12.2% managers of color to 15.7%.

While our overall workforce numbers are encouraging, we have work to do if we are going to have managers and supervisors that look like the region we serve. I am proposing, as our goal, that 20% of managers will be people of color by 2018. I know we can do it if we are intentional. I have directed the Council to look for and eliminate biases and barriers in our recruitment, application, and interview process. I want to acknowledge the progress we have made while pushing ourselves to do even better.

We've made progress in diversifying the Metro Transit Police Department, due to the commitment of Brian Lamb and Chief John Harrington. In 2011, the force was 5% diverse. Today, 30% of our police force are women and people of color.

When the Chief presented these numbers to the Council earlier this year, I asked him how he attracted and retained a much more diverse workforce. He gave a simple answer. Number 1: be intentional. Number 2: measure your results. Number 3: look at barriers in the process that may unintentionally remove qualified applicants.

We are engaging more people inviting them to be a part of the decision-making process from the beginning. Soon, we will have a new avenue for that engagement, through the Equity Advisory Committee. We received more than 100 applications from across the region for this committee. Once chosen, this committee will advise the Council on how best to address racial disparities in our projects, policymaking, and other practices.

Talking about race and systemic discrimination can make us all uncomfortable. But it's an important part of identifying the cause of the disparities, being intentional and focused on correcting them, and finally holding ourselves accountable to doing better individually and collectively.

We at the Council have some great partners committed to eliminating our disparities and making our region stronger. Mayor Betsy Hodges and Mayor Chris Coleman continue to make equity a centerpiece of their cities' work. The leadership shown by a number of partners across the entire region demonstrates that equity is something we must address as we move from talk to action.

Another way for the Council to contribute to a more equitable region is through transit.

In a Harvard study of upward mobility, commuting time has emerged as the single strongest factor in the odds of escaping poverty. The longer an average commute in a given county, the worse the chances are for low-income families to move up the ladder.

The relationship between transportation and social mobility is stronger than that between social mobility and several other factors, including crime, elementary-school test scores or the percentage of two-parent families in a community.

If we are serious about having an impact on disparities in the region, we must look at the impacts of transit and transportation investments.

To compete as a region, we need a robust transit system. One that accommodates the anticipated future growth, makes efficient use of our infrastructure, gives people transportation options, and connects more of our region directly to jobs and opportunity.

Governor Dayton and Lt. Governor Smith have both put forward an ambitious transportation funding plan and spent the time out around the state and region talking about the need for these critical investments. This isn't roads against transit, we need to embrace a vision to build and maintain both systems. Commissioner Charlie Zelle and I understand the linkage between both systems. Transportation is about mobility, economic competitiveness and strong communities.

This session is really a make-or-break moment for our transportation infrastructure and I remain cautiously optimistic that the House, Senate, and administration can work together to pass a bill that is comprehensive and bipartisan, that solves for our roads, bridges, and transit in the metro area as well as statewide.

A plan for a regional transit system includes new shelters, many with heat and light. It includes investments for 47 additional bus lines and 76 expanded lines. It includes more frequent service for 1 million riders across the metropolitan area.

The next step up that ladder in our transit vision is to complete Southwest LRT, the Green Line extension from Minneapolis through the cities of St. Louis Park, Hopkins, Minnetonka and Eden Prairie.

It's no secret that the proposed Southwest LRT project has faced its share of challenges. I am here to tell you that I couldn't be more hopeful about the project I want to thank all the mayors, council members, and County board members for their steadfast support over the last number of months.

We must still complete the environmental analysis with FTA and secure the remaining local funds. The state share of \$135 million will accompany \$745 million in local funds, which CTIB, Hennepin County, and the cities along the line have committed. It will also leverage a \$1.8 billion investment, creating thousands of jobs today while connecting people to jobs of the future. The president shares my confidence – just this week he included an additional \$125 million in the federal budget for next year.

We must secure these state dollars this spring and, again, I remain cautiously optimistic that we can do so in a regional sales tax to enhance the metro area transit system.

The other project with a deadline for the Council this spring is continued work on the Orange Line BRT project which runs from downtown Minneapolis right to this community, Burnsville.



The Orange Line typifies how the future of transitways in our region depends on buses and should make efficient use of existing infrastructure.

Today, the current I-35W bus service carries 14,000 riders a day and will nearly double in ridership by 2040. At peak traffic, buses make up 1% of the traffic but carry 24% of the commuters. Remember, the bus is the backbone of our transit system.

The project's remaining state share of \$12 million is essential in 2016. This investment will leverage an additional \$138 million to deliver the project in partnership with MnDOT and their additional \$300 million they are spending to improve the highway.

While SWLRT and the Orange Line are the immediate needs, our vision is a network that connects with every major destination in the region. It is a full system that connects to 12 of the 14 fortune 500 companies in the region. It connects to universities and college campuses. And it connects an additional 1 million people with a 30-minute transit commute. An investment in the network is an investment in our region.

Blue Line extension, or Bottineau LRT, is the line that continues from the current Blue line at Target Field station in downtown Minneapolis through the communities of Golden Valley, Robbinsdale, Crystal and Brooklyn Park. The project is presently working its way through the municipal consent process, and I am glad that we have had robust citizen engagement and the Minneapolis Park Board at the table from the beginning of the process.

I also want to mention Gold Line BRT, which is a bus rapid transit project in the east metro that we have worked closely with Washington and Ramsey County on over the last year. Both of these corridors provide regional balance to the transit system while also serving the communities who are excited about the benefits of a transitway investment.

Another east metro project I am very excited to tell you about is the A Line, a first of its kind Arterial Bus Rapid Transit line. The A Line will connect the Blue Line and Green Line, as well as a number of college campuses and destinations in Roseville, Falcon Heights, St. Paul and Minneapolis. I am pleased to announce that the A Line will be open on June 11, four months from today.

These are generational investments and that is why these corridors can take years to study and advance, but the time is now to move our region forward by investing in a transit system for tomorrow.

As the Metropolitan Council continues to make the emphatic case for transit investments, it is important to reflect on the successes we can celebrate over the last few years. We added a number of transitways to the regional network from the Red Line BRT to the Green Line on University Avenue. We are beginning to see what a regional system looks like.

In the last year Metro Transit has also made vital improvements in our bus shelter, facilities, and signage around the region, adding and repairing hundreds of shelters across our system. We continue to improve our social media outreach, technological enhancements, and other parts of the service that allows us to better communicate with our customers. I'm also pleased about the innovative partnerships with HourCar and exploring fare synchronization with vehicle and bike-sharing programs.

By every metric these transit investments have been successful. Whether we are celebrating record ridership, adding up the dollars invested along the corridors, the track record is one I would argue is filled with enormous value for the people of our region.

Smart infrastructure investments lead to development opportunities. A couple of years ago the Metropolitan Council developed a Transit Oriented Development policy guide to continue better integration of community development with our transit investments. I am very excited at the opportunity that one of our own properties that Metro Transit owns can help facilitate transformational development at the Snelling "Bus Barn" site.

We still have a few details to iron out with the City of Saint Paul, but I am confident we will get there and we wouldn't be in this position today without the leadership of Mayor Coleman and City of Saint Paul who understand that Major League soccer is integral to a vital region and that the site has so much more to offer in the way of future development opportunity and creating a vibrant midway neighborhood.

It is an exciting time in the region—we are living in a modern day transit boom—the demand and ridership has increased 10 of the last 11 years leading to nearly 100 million transit trips in the region in 2015. This is the highest number of trips in our region in decades.

And we accomplish this with the partnership of the Counties Transit Improvement Board. I want to recognize the leadership of Commissioner Peter McLaughlin for CTIB's commitment to a strong partnership and their vision of accessible, affordable transit that connects the entire region.

We accomplish this through collaboration with key stakeholders such as MnDOT, the Transportation Advisory Board and Chair Jim Hovland with an understanding that transportation means aviation, freight, highways, roads, bridges, and transit, working together as one system.

We accomplish this with the strong support of legislators who believe in a transportation system that is multi-modal and gives our region options for how we can all move around. I want to call out the leadership of legislators who are here that have been unequivocal supporters of our transit, road, and bridge infrastructure at the Capitol.

We accomplish this with the collaboration in planning and operating with the Suburban Transit Providers and I see a number of those partners here today.

We accomplish this with the efforts of business groups who have had a regional focus like the Minneapolis and St. Paul Chambers and I want to pay tribute to the leadership of Todd Klingel who is with us today. Thank you Todd.

We accomplish this with the strong operational track record of Metro Transit providing a reliable, safe, and affordable option to connect to a job or school.

We accomplish this with mayors, city council members and groups like the Regional Council of Mayors who are connected to their communities and invested in a prosperous future.

We accomplish this with the partnership from communities that leverage our transit investments into livable communities and the type of development that is efficient, healthy, and vibrant.

And we have much more to accomplish in wastewater infrastructure and managing our resources with stewardship.

We have much more to accomplish in housing and building communities that are prosperous.

We have much more to accomplish in maintaining our world-class parks system and opening it up to everyone.

We have much, much more to accomplish in eliminating our opportunity gaps for everyone who lives in our region.

We have much more to accomplish in enhancing and expanding our transportation and transit system.

There is so much more we **can** and **must** accomplish. We **must** work together. We **can** build new and long-lasting partnerships.

I want us to leave here today with a sense of pride in what we have done, **together**, and a sense of urgency about what we must do, **together**.

Thank you.