

A Record of Accomplishment

Gov. Mark Dayton in March appointed a new and engaged Metropolitan Council following a rigorous selection process, and stressed from the outset the focus on **Getting Minnesota Working Again**. The governor indicated the appointments were the “hardest appointment decisions that I’ve had to make” because of the number of well-qualified candidates. The new chair and Council set to work on creating a new strategic vision, with a focus on jobs and economic development and delivery of cost effective and efficient services that will help ensure the region’s ability to be competitive and attract employers.

2011 Key Accomplishments

Job creation and improving competitiveness

Council secured federal Full Funding Grant Agreement for Central Corridor LRT; advancing job creation, mobility and connections to work

The federal government, in April, committed to paying half the cost of building the \$957 million Central Corridor LRT Project. By year’s end, the project will be about 40 percent complete, with service on track to begin in 2014.

The project created more than 2,200 jobs to date, employing workers from throughout the state, with a projected payroll this year of nearly \$62 million. With a state investment of nearly \$100 million, project construction, upon completion, is expected to create 3,400 jobs and a projected payroll of \$250 million.

The project achieved workforce participation of 16.4 percent minority and 7.6 percent women, and DBE participation by construction contractors to date of 12.3 percent.

The Council recognizes the challenges to local businesses on the corridor and took 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.

Council secured FTA approval to enter preliminary engineering on Southwest Corridor LRT; advancing the goal of promoting economic development and continuing to develop a regional transit network

SWLRT is one of 12 projects nationwide to achieve PE status. FTA approval represents a major step toward winning federal matching funds and building the 15-mile LRT line between downtown Minneapolis and Eden Prairie. The corridor is projected to create 3,800 jobs, with payroll expected to equal about a quarter of the project cost.

“Corridors of Opportunity” regional collaboration creates opportunities for investment in jobs, development, affordable housing

A spring visit from HUD Secretary Shaun Donovan helped kick off the Corridors of Opportunity Initiative. Business leaders, foundations, nonprofits, neighborhood residents, local governments and the Council are collaborating to spur private investment and create long-term jobs, affordable housing and sustainable communities, using the region’s emerging transitway system as a development focus.

Led by a policy board, which Chair Haigh co-chairs, the initiative is funding affordable housing activities and transit-oriented development, as well as research and planning activities on the region's emerging transit corridors. Funds come from a \$5 million HUD Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant and a \$16 million Living Cities Integration Initiative. The funding awards leverage millions of dollars in other public and private investment.

The three-year Corridors of Opportunity initiative is another strategy for targeting investment of grant dollars. Corridors of Opportunity seeks to build and develop transit corridors as a means to shape growth and guide land uses to ensure the region's economy competes globally and thrives locally, that the region continues to offer distinctive places to live, work and recreate, and people of all backgrounds and incomes share in the opportunities the region has to offer.

Council promotes Livable Communities, awarding 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 approved changes to the criteria to ensure the funds awarded are even more effective and productive at ensuring economic growth and job creation.

To date, the Council awarded \$214 million via 657 grants, creating or retaining more than 35,000 jobs and leveraging billions of dollars in other investment. With some grants still under review, the Council expects 2011 grant awards to total about \$15 million, adding to job creation and opportunity.

Improving government: the best services at the best price

Transit ridership grows; on track to meet long-term goals

Based on current ridership projections, 2011 will be only the second time in 30 years that customers boarded Metro Transit vehicles more than 80 million times. Metro Transit is the largest service provider in the region. Taking into account *all* regional transit service, including suburban, contracted and ADA service, ridership is expected to climb to 94 million rides this year for an overall system increase of three percent. Metro Mobility alone, the service for people with disabilities, increased nearly five percent to almost 1.6 million rides.

Council maintained regional transit service, despite general fund reduction

The state general fund appropriation for transit cut 40 percent for the 2012-13 biennium. The Council worked with the Counties Transit Improvement Board (CTIB), Suburban Transit Providers and Metro Transit to absorb this reduction fairly throughout the region to maintain critical bus routes, avoid an across-the-board fare increase and minimize the impact of the cuts on transit riders.

The special session bill also authorized the Council to issue \$35 million in bonds to fund the fleet and facilities that support regional transit. And, the bonding bill allowed the Council, working with CTIB, to invest \$20 million in transit infrastructure.

Council partnered to advance Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)

BRT combines the flexibility of buses with the advantages of rail. The Council participated as a partner in this year's groundbreaking for Cedar Avenue BRT, where local officials touted the role of transit in economic development. Construction of bus-only shoulder lanes is proceeding along Cedar Avenue. The lanes will provide exclusive right-of-way for bus rapid transit, attracting riders with high-frequency service and reduced travel time.

Council produced Stadium Proposal Risk Analysis, meeting governor's request to identify risks to the public

The Metropolitan Council and Metropolitan Sports Facilities Commission conveyed the "Stadium Proposal Risk Analysis" to Governor Dayton in October. The Governor asked both agencies to "ascertain the potential risks, if any, of the (Ramsey County/Minnesota Vikings' stadium) proposal and suggest ways to mitigate or eliminate any exposure to the public."

Council protects public health and the environment; achieved historic record of permit compliance

As of October 1, the Council's massive wastewater treatment system had achieved 100% compliance with their state and federal operating permits for 56 consecutive months. That's a rare feat anywhere in the world for a treatment system of our size and complexity. The largest treatment plant in the region, the Metro Plant handles 200 million gallons of wastewater every day.

Council recognized for energy conservation and savings

MCES, the Council division responsible for collecting and treating the vast majority of the region's wastewater, earned a Gold Award from Xcel Energy for the highest electrical savings of all the utility's large commercial and industrial customers in an eight-state area between January 2010 and June 2011. MCES reduced energy costs by 15 percent for an annual savings of over \$2 million.

Fuel economy of Metro Transit's bus fleet improved 9 percent in the past five years – in part due to the acquisition of 97 hybrid buses. This year, the agency won a \$1.2 million federal grant for two next-generation hybrid buses. The innovative buses can run short distances on all-electric power and have minimal idling.

A comprehensive energy audit of garages in 2008 led Metro Transit to invest in improvements such as automated building controls, efficient lighting, and high-speed insulated bay doors to conserve energy and reduce utility costs. In comparison to 2008, the agency expects a \$1.7M budget savings and a reduction of over 6,000 tons of CO_{2e}.

Council improved relationships with local officials, key constituencies and partners

The Governor appointed 15 new Council members in March. The new Council members were immediately oriented to the work of the Council. They began to actively meet with local officials and key constituencies within their districts to learn about the needs and issues within the region.

The Council also improved its relationship with the Counties Transit Improvement Board and Suburban Transit Providers to advance our shared goal of a built-out and thriving transitway network. The Chair, especially, has reached out to the business community to

engage and enlist its support for transit as a way to get people to jobs and ensure economic prosperity and efficient movement of goods through the region.

Council recognized for supporting Veterans

Selected as a Yellow Ribbon Organization by the Minnesota National Guard, the Council is one of only a few large government bodies to receive the distinction. The designation recognizes the Council for supporting its National Guard members, war veterans and their families during and after active service.

Ensuring fairness in taxation/fiscal responsibility

Council maintained sound fiscal management

In their review of the Council's finances and the regional economy, Moody's Investors Service and Standard & Poor's, respectively, reaffirmed the Council's Aaa and AAA ratings on \$1.29 billion of long-term, general obligation debt. Moody's report credits the Council with "conservative management practices that include minimum reserve policies for all funds."