

Governance of Transit in the Twin Cities

Update to 2011 Evaluation Report

Problems Identified

- **Complex Governance Structure.** Several organizations have transit responsibilities in the region, including the Metropolitan Council, the Transportation Advisory Board, the Counties Transit Improvement Board, seven county regional railroad authorities, and six suburban transit providers. Each organization has a distinct but overlapping role regarding transit in the region. The complexity of the system makes it difficult to know which organization is accountable for which transit responsibility.
- **Coordination Problems.** There is significant distrust between the Metropolitan Council and other transit organizations in the region. Coordination between the Council and the suburban transit providers has required significant efforts.
- **The Metropolitan Council Lacks Credibility.** Many stakeholders did not think that Metropolitan Council members—who are appointed by the Governor—are sufficiently accountable to the public for their decisions. Also, because Council members are not elected to their positions, local elected officials often question the legitimacy of Council decisions.
- **Law Prohibits Consideration of A Potential Transitway.** State law prohibits the consideration of the Dan Patch corridor (a potential commuter rail corridor between Minneapolis and Northfield) for development as a commuter rail line. This prohibition may limit the ability of stakeholders to adequately plan other transitways in the region.

Changes Implemented

- **New Efforts to Improve Coordination.** The Metropolitan Council and the suburban transit providers have been meeting and are working toward establishing a committee to address ongoing issues and improve relations.
- **No Legislative Changes Have Been Implemented.** Legislative bills regarding transit governance have been considered, but none have been enacted into law.

Action Needed

- **Restructure the Metropolitan Council.** The Legislature should restructure the Metropolitan Council so that it has a mix of appointed and elected Council members, all serving staggered terms. This would be a first step towards a more effective and streamlined transit governance system.
- **Allow Consideration of the Dan Patch Corridor.** The Legislature should amend Minnesota law to allow stakeholders to consider the Dan Patch corridor in transit planning.