

September 14, 2020

**To** Governor's Blue Ribbon Committee on the Metropolitan Council's  
Structure and Services

**From** Deborah A. Dyson, Legislative Analyst

**Subject** Brief History of Metropolitan Council Governance Issues and  
Proposals

I was invited to make a presentation to the Blue Ribbon Committee to provide some historical context for the committee's work. Below is an outline of what I hope to cover.

The Governor's executive order establishing the Blue Ribbon Committee states that the committee is to review:

- a. The role of elected versus appointed Metropolitan Council members
- b. The Metropolitan Council's role as a Metropolitan Planning Organization ("MPO") and identify and evaluate the ways this federal designation may complement and conflict with the Council's responsibilities under Minnesota law
- c. The effectiveness of the delivery of regional transit service

### *Current Status of the Metropolitan Council*

- Political subdivision of the state, jurisdiction in seven metropolitan counties with 56 percent of state's population
- Functions:
  - Planning and coordination: Metropolitan Development Guide (Thrive MSP 2040), with long term policy and system plans, review and approval of local comprehensive plans
  - Operations: owns and operates regional services: transit, wastewater collection and treatment
  - Pass-through funding: Metro HRA, parks and open space, MLCA

While transportation is a significant and important function for the council, it is not the only council function to take into consideration when looking at the council's governance structure.

## History

1957 – Metropolitan Area Planning Commission

1967 – Issues?

- wastewater
- transportation
- federal requirements

1967 – Question was not *whether* to establish a new regional governance structure but what regional structure: elected or appointed.

- Elected: planning and operations
- Appointed: planning and coordinating

The 1967 Legislature established the Council as an appointed body and in the same year established the Metropolitan Transit Commission to take over failing private bus service.

1967 – 1990

- 1969 –the Metropolitan Waste Control Commission
- 1974 – the Metro HRA
- 1974 –the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission
- 1975 – Recodification
- 1976 – the Metropolitan Land Planning Act
- 1977 – the Metropolitan Sports Facilities Commission
- 1984 – Regional Transit Board, governance studies
- 1989 – Dual-track airport planning

1990-1993 – 5 major bills to reorganize metropolitan government. 3 – elected; 2 – appointed

1993 – State Advisory Council on Metropolitan Governance

**1994** – Metropolitan Government Reorganization Act

1995 – Metropolitan Livable Communities Act, changes to the Metropolitan Land Planning Act, decision in the dual track airport planning process

1997 – elected Metropolitan Council bill passed, vetoed by the Governor

Since 1995, many years see bills introduced to study governance, abolish the Council, make the Council a state agency, make the Council an elected body or a COG, change who makes appointments, split off a function.

More recently bills to re-established staggered terms for Council members. Those passed have been vetoed by governors of both major parties.

2018 – a bill passed to change membership of the council to consist of 29 members of which 24 would be elected city and county officials. Vetoed.