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# Metropolitan Council **1997 Annual Report**

- Implementing Metro 2040
- Pursuing transit improvements
- Promoting competitive government

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Metropolitan Council  
**1997 Annual Report**

January 1998







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### Cover photo—

Courtesy of Greater Minneapolis Area Convention and Visitors Association

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*The Council pledged to  
continue to work with local  
communities to help them tailor  
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## Letter from the

*Chair*

The Twin Cities metro region — a steady economic success story for many decades now — in 1997 saw continuing job growth, rising personal incomes, prospering business growth and historic lows in unemployment. At the same time, there was measurable progress made in a number of vulnerable urban issues.

The Metropolitan Council, for 30 years a significant contributing force in sustaining the region's competitiveness and stability, attracted controversy and criticism, along with acclaim as the new framework and philosophy for managing future growth, Metro 2040, was advanced for implementation.

This was also a year for making basic regional services better. An already very efficient wastewater treatment system laid plans for major phosphorous reductions and rehabilitation of aging equipment, while setting in motion a serious re-thinking of the fairness issues in charging for sewer availability. A new transit management team was selected at Metro Transit to make the most of limited and often insufficient resources, as regional transit service overall sought increased ridership and performance. By year's end, ridership, schedule reliability, and safety numbers were all moving in the right direction. A system of transitways emerged as the central strategy for the future.

The Council also renewed its commitment to a philosophy of planning and operating that seeks partnerships with local governments as well as organizations and businesses representing the many communities of the metro area. Whether it was the special task force that worked on crime reduction in Minneapolis or the outreach to every local government working on its revised comprehensive plan, the intended message was the same: *we can get more done together than separately.*

Metropolitan Council members identified three high-priority areas in 1997:

- Implementing Metro 2040 growth management goals
- Pursuing transit improvements
- Promoting competitive regional and local government

## Shaping Future Growth

The Council in 1997 worked with more than 70 key communities—where growth is expected to be highest in the next 25 years—to reach consensus on projections for growth and the available supply of land.

Metro 2040 gives communities flexibility to plan local growth and redevelopment, with an eye toward more compact development and efficient use of land, infrastructure

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*A year for  
making basic  
regional services  
better...*

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and services. It calls for preserving agriculture and open space, revitalizing the urban core and promoting job growth along transportation corridors.

In 1997, 97 communities have voluntarily set goals to provide 12,600 affordable rental units and nearly 69,000 units for family ownership through the year 2010 consistent with projected growth. In 1997, dollars awarded to Eden Prairie, Plymouth and Lakeville will offer 126 new units of affordable rental townhomes. More affordable housing will also be created with \$117 million in federal dollars under terms of the Hollman settlement.

More than 118 acres of polluted sites were targeted for clean-up for business development, with a resulting increase in the region's net tax capacity of \$4 million. The redevelopment on cleaned-up sites will create 2,700 new jobs at average wages of \$10 to \$11 per hour. Overall Council grants of \$14.25 million under the Livable Communities Act leveraged more than \$304 million in other public and private investment.

## **New transit solutions**

Transitways — as a system of corridors dedicated to transit — emerged from growth planning as the only practical means of providing citizens with mobility choices, in the face of inevitable worsening of congestion on the region's principal roads. As permanent infrastructure, they serve also as corridor magnets for development and re-development, facilitating more intensive uses of land. Because the region cannot and chooses not to match population growth with further extensions of the road system, the Council has adopted an attitude of persistent impatience, pushing as fast as possible to site and build an alternative system.

These transitways will offer riders a real choice, and increasingly a competitive edge, over drivers who stay on the regular roads. Plans are in the works for the first three major transitways. Leading the pack is a transit-only corridor bordering the new Hiawatha Avenue in Minneapolis that will connect downtown, the University of Minnesota, the airport, and the Mall of America. Construction could begin as early as late 1999.

Regional transit service in 1997 took the first steps toward an upward trend. Improved reliability, tailored routes and increasing diversity of vehicle types and sizes to meet local service needs are already showing up in ridership increases. Plans are brewing for imaginative approaches to building more ridership, including mass discounts at major employment sites. As rapidly as possible, the opportunities to redesign local service to better meet local needs is being extended to clusters of communities.

## **Becoming more competitive**

Being more competitive ensures the public is getting the best services for the lowest possible price. We sought and gained changes in law to help us become more competitive. In addition, both managed competition and an innovative procurement process for wastewater services and facilities was initiated in 1997.

Implementing changes in technology, use of labor and work processes at wastewater treatment plants is saving the region \$2 million annually. Today our rates are 29 percent below the national average for areas of our size.

1997 also saw the first contract renewal with transit workers achieved on a mutually acceptable basis in more than a decade, creating a three-year period in which to improve both performance and good relations with the workers on whom the performance depends. Transit redesign continued to provide more flexibility in meeting customer needs while allowing us to reinvest about \$2 million over two years in Metro Transit core market areas.

## Partnerships are the way to regional vitality

A one-stop shop for communities and developers that need financing to build and provide affordable housing: this was the basis for an innovative partnership that resulted in streamlining and simplifying a complicated system for accessing housing development dollars. Still a unique concept regionally and nationally, the Council, Minnesota Housing Finance Agency and Family Housing Fund was recognized in 1997 with the "Cooperative Public Service Award" by Partnership Minnesota for this creative, common-sense initiative.

A partnership of local, regional and state government is investing in a region-wide public safety radio system. The new system will improve two-way radio communications among law enforcement, emergency and public works, provide more capacity for future growth, and save tax dollars by reducing duplication. This effort was recognized by Partnership Minnesota with a Governor's Commendation for improved government communications.

At the end of a long, sometimes tedious, very controversial siting process, we reached an agreement with the community of Cottage Grove on the size and location of the wastewater treatment plant needed by the communities of South Washington County for their continued growth. It was not a perfect process, but the result was right, and responsive to the concerns of the community.

The Council is also leading an effort for sharing of geographic information in the region that will vastly expand access to geographic data region-wide.

We recognize that mandates — even when they're rigorously enforced — get compliance but not cooperation. We trust the wisdom of local perspective, even as we insist on the sensibility of coherent regional policies. We pledge decision-making as regional and local partners and in earnest retreat from we-know-best, business-as-usual ways of deciding things. In an atmosphere of constant change, even with debate continuing over regional governance choices...the Metropolitan Council in 1997 delivered regional thinking, planning and efficient services that made the Twin Cities area a better place to live...a dream in most other regions.

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*...we can get  
more done  
together than  
separately.*

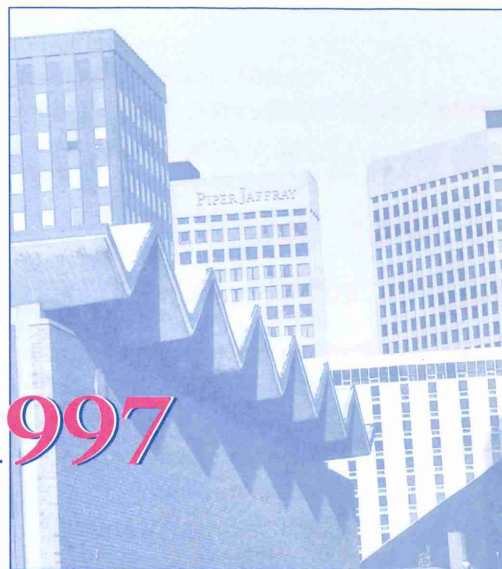
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Curt Johnson  
Metropolitan Council Chair





## *Twin Cities Area* **Regional Profile/1997**



**I**n 1997, the Twin Cities region marked another year of good economic performance exhibited by stable job growth and extremely low unemployment rates.

The performance of the Twin Cities economy remains one of the region's key strengths. The Twin Cities region is relatively wealthy, with a well-balanced income distribution and average cost of living compared to other regions. Personal income per capita is sixth among the top 25 metro areas.

Job growth kept at a steady pace in 1997, with continuing low unemployment reaching a historic low rate of 2.5 percent in the third quarter. Businesses in fast-growing industries like software and consulting as well as manufacturing experienced a shortage of workers with appropriate skills and experience. Third quarter employment, coupled with warmer-than-average winter weather, reflected a solid 1.9 percent in growth over the previous year, which translates to about 30,600 jobs.

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*...economy remains  
one of the region's  
key strengths.*

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Business earnings growth increased this past year. The diversity of industries and number of Fortune 500 companies located in the region provided a stable and healthy basis for earnings.

Nationwide retail sales were disappointing. The Associated Press reported consumers buying briskly in the final weeks of the holiday season, to take advantage of discounts and markdowns. However, consumers were spending more on travel and services rather than traditional retail goods. Also, consumers were buying more throughout the year rather than just at the holidays.

Building permits for 10,785 new housing units were issued through Oct., 1997. This was within 3 percent of the number issued in 1996. Among the nation's top 25 regions, the Twin Cities area ranks 18th in home-building activity. Existing home sales in the region continued strong through Nov. thanks to the economy and low interest rates. Home-buying transactions were up 3.8 percent from 1996, with average home prices increasing approximately 5.3 percent.

The commercial and industrial market continued to grow. A shortage of large blocks of space, rising rents, a lack of building space since the early 1990s, solid job growth and low vacancy rates

created a market for new office development. Office vacancy rates fell to 7.9 percent through 2nd quarter 1997, the lowest rate in 13 years, according to Towle Real Estate. Industrial construction actively spread throughout the Twin Cities area. Given the building activity and volume of new projects, vacancy rates jumped to 9.9 percent through 3rd quarter, from 4.9 percent in 1996, reported Towle Real Estate.

Residents of this region and state are relatively healthy. Availability and quality of health care are good and costs are comparable to other parts of the country. The percent of uninsured people is lower in the Twin Cities region and state than elsewhere. Minnesota ranks consistently in the top 10 for low prevalence of smoking, low number of motor vehicle deaths, good access to primary care, low rates of heart disease and infectious diseases, and low rates of premature deaths.

While the population as a whole is living relatively well, there continues to be pockets of poverty in the central cities and older suburbs. The overall poverty rate for people of color is higher in the central cities than in newer suburbs. Efforts to revitalize the core cities and spur economic development and job growth are demonstrating results in the clean-up of polluted sites.

The region's physical infrastructure — highways, sewers, airports, parks are adequate for the most part to meet demands of the current population. In light of projected growth, questions remain about additional strain and increased need for maintenance and repair.

While the region's roadways are comparatively mobile when measured against other urban areas, congestion is growing on area highways. During peak traffic periods, 35 percent of freeway lane miles and 55 percent of principal arterial lane miles are congested. However, a decline in bus ridership showed signs of reversal in 1997. Metro Transit ridership increased 3.2 percent over projections in the 3rd quarter. The regional transit system carried an average of 206,000 passengers on weekdays.

The region's wastewater treatment system continued to charge user rates 29 percent below the national average for service areas of the same size. With continuous capital improvements, Minneapolis-St. Paul international airport is serving 35 percent more passengers than in 1990. The regional park system, with more than 127,000 acres in parks and open space topped 16 million visitors in 1996, with anticipated increases in 1997.

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*In 1997 the Council, in partnership with cities, development agencies and businesses, held an economic summit on the urban core.*

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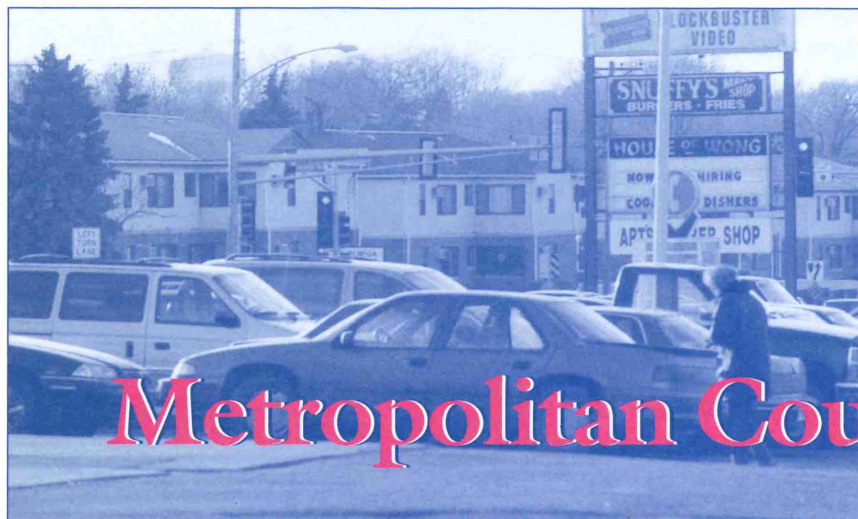




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*...Council in 1997  
awarded \$14.25  
million for projects...*

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## Metropolitan Council *in 1997*

### Council and communities shape boundaries of Metro 2040 growth strategy

In 1997 the Metropolitan Council and the region's 186 communities began translating the Metro 2040 growth strategy into local land use decisions—what kind of development will accommodate future growth and where it should happen.

The Council reached agreement with key communities targeted for high growth in the region on household growth forecasts for the next 25 years. All communities will need to update their comprehensive land use plans by Dec. 31, 1998, to align with Metro 2040. The strategy calls for developing the seven-county area in a more compact fashion, preserving prime agricultural land, setting aside an "urban reserve" for development only after 2020, and targeting certain areas for business and job development.

Revitalizing the urban core is another key piece of Metro 2040. In 1997 the Council, in partnership with cities, development agencies and businesses, held an economic summit on the urban core.

An economic action plan for revitalizing the core (the two downtowns, their immediate neighborhoods and the University Ave. corridor) was initiated. The plan will be developed in 1998.

The Council also convened an agricultural preservation task force to establish criteria and a process for identifying land for possible designation and long-term preservation as agriculture by local communities. In 1998 tools and practices to actually protect the land as agriculture will be evaluated and recommended.

### Vital communities

Helping communities plan for the future, the Council in 1997 awarded \$14.25 million for projects that provided more affordable and life-cycle housing throughout the region, cleaned up polluted sites for redevelopment and jobs, and spurred creative development or redevelopment of land to integrate housing, transit, sewer infrastructure and open spaces more efficiently. Council dollars leveraged more than \$304 million in other funding for the projects, creating jobs and helping the region meet regional milestones.

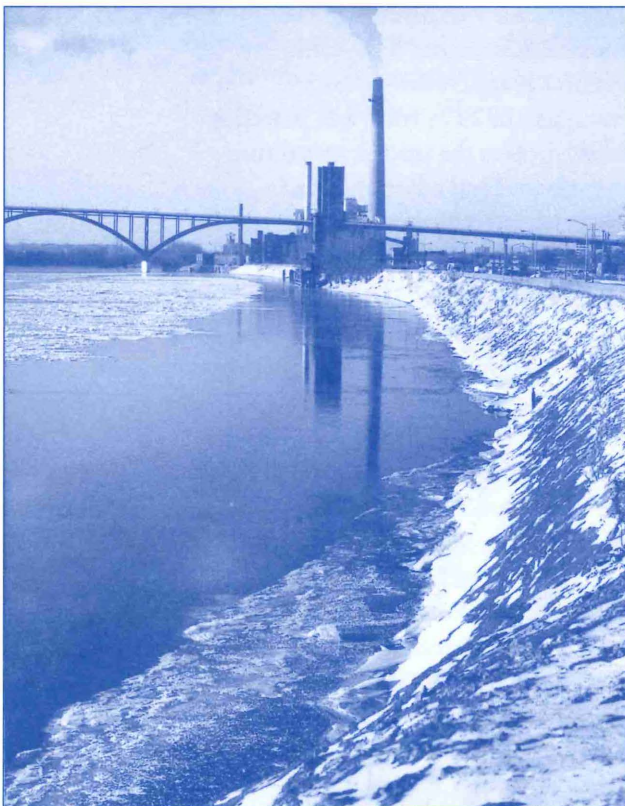


Two stunning new regional parks opened in 1997—Lake Minnetonka and St. Croix Bluffs, expanding the parks system as visits grow to more than 16 million annually.

## Restoring the region's waterways

Weathering one of the worst flood seasons in the region's history, the Council's Environmental Services Division (MCES) continued its outstanding performance with 99.9 percent overall permit compliance for nine wastewater treatment plants. The plants treated approximately 107.5 billion gallons of wastewater from 2.5 million residents in 104 communities this year.

Through implementation of strategic and business plans, MCES improved its efficiency and cost competitiveness in 1997. The average cost per household for wastewater treatment in the Twin Cities area is 29 percent less than in similarly sized sewer service areas nation-wide.



The Council and Cottage Grove reached agreement to build a 15-million-gallon-per-day wastewater treatment plant on the 10-acre site of the current facility in Cottage Grove. The plant will serve projected growth in south Washington County to 2050. The siting successfully integrates the Metro 2040 growth strategy, protects the environment, and helps build regional and local cooperation to solve problems.

The Council awarded nearly \$4 million in grants to local governments and nonprofits for projects to help restore the region's waterways.

## Transit advances

Planning for a new transitway linking downtown Minneapolis, the University of Minnesota and Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport got on the fast track in 1997. The exclusive bus lanes will reduce congestion, make transit more attractive, move people quickly and efficiently, and protect air quality.

Construction on the Hiawatha Transitway could begin as soon as 1999, with operations starting in 2001. Two other corridors are being studied for potential transitways:

- a Riverview Corridor between downtown St. Paul and the airport; and
- a North Corridor linking downtown Minneapolis and Northtown Shopping Center.

In response to a ridership challenge from the 1997 Legislature, the regional transit system set a goal to increase bus ridership by two million region-wide in the

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*...urban core is another  
key piece of Metro 2040.*

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*...cost per household  
for wastewater  
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current biennium. Metro Transit, the region's largest provider, is leading a multi-faceted effort to get more people to ride the bus. The effort includes restructuring poorly-performing routes, adding more trips to heavily used routes, modernizing the bus fleet and a media campaign to attract new riders.

## Council increases competitiveness

To increase its competitiveness the Council launched a process to determine which of its activities could open to managed competition between Council employees and outside vendors. In the first year of an ongoing evaluation process, two projects were identified for managed competition: office copying services, and groundskeeping and snow removal for sewer interceptor and lift metering stations. The goal is to ensure the public receives the highest quality services for the lowest price.

The Council also initiated an innovative procurement process to open the possibility of public/private partnership for ownership and operation of wastewater solids handling facilities for the Blue Lake Wastewater Treatment Plant.



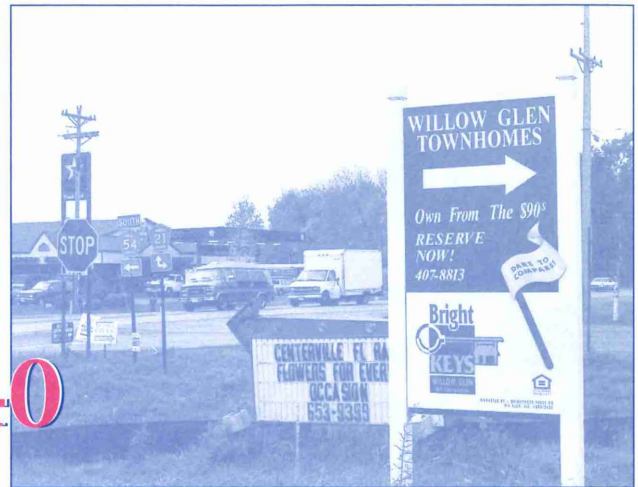


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*The plan will save an estimated \$1.6 billion that would otherwise be needed for new public infrastructure...*

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## Metro 2040



### Working with communities to shape future regional growth

In 1997 the Metropolitan Council and the region's 186 communities moved from their dialogue on how the region should grow to translating the Metro 2040 growth strategy into local land use decisions—what kind of development and where it should happen.

Metro 2040 shapes future growth—the additional 330,000 households, 650,000 more people and 440,000 new jobs expected in the region in the next 25 years. The plan calls for:

- Developing the seven-county Twin Cities area in a more compact fashion to reduce sprawl
- Preserving prime agricultural areas and identifying open spaces and ways to preserve the natural environment
- Identifying an “urban reserve” area set aside for development only after the year 2020
- Revitalizing the region's urban core
- Targeting certain areas along major transportation corridors for job development

To help the region keep its competitive edge in the global economy over the next several decades, Metro 2040 designates more than half

of the growth inside the current urban service area boundary, and the remainder on up to 80,000 acres at the urbanizing edge of the region. The plan will save an estimated \$1.6 billion that would otherwise be needed for new public infrastructure, like roads and sewers, to serve developing areas.

To translate the growth strategy into action, each of the 186 cities and townships in the seven-county area will need to update their comprehensive plans by Dec. 31, 1998. The plans are based in large part on how much each community will grow over the next 25 years. In 1997 the Council worked with more than 70 communities—particularly those expected to grow the most—to reach consensus on projections for population, household and job growth, and on the supply of available land.

Working with the communities yielded several results. First of all, general consensus was reached with the largest communities about forecasts of household growth. However, it became clear that the amount of land available for development within the current urban service area is less than previously thought. But because communities are developing and redeveloping at greater densities, they are using land more efficiently. The result is that while not as much of the



projected growth can occur within the current urban service area, less land will be needed to expand the urban service area in the next 25 years—60,000 acres instead of the maximum 80,000.

Emerging market forces will likely work in favor of more dense development in the future. As the large baby boom generation ages, a preference for housing that requires less maintenance—apartments, townhouses and condominiums—will grow. These types of housing can be constructed at much greater densities than single-family homes.

The Council held a series of workshops in the spring to help communities understand the growth strategy and discuss ideas and tools for putting it into action. Workshop topics included clustering housing to preserve open space, neighborhood renewal, and creating a town center, among others.

A centerpiece of the workshops was innovative technology that showed aerial views, moving 360-degree ground views, and other photographs and drawings of successful local projects for mixed-use development, affordable housing and redevelopment. For communities in the urban area facing the challenge of increasing the density of development, the successful projects illustrate what can be done attractively and with local support. The technology also demonstrated how different features of the region interrelate—waterways, highways, jobs, households, and parks, for example.

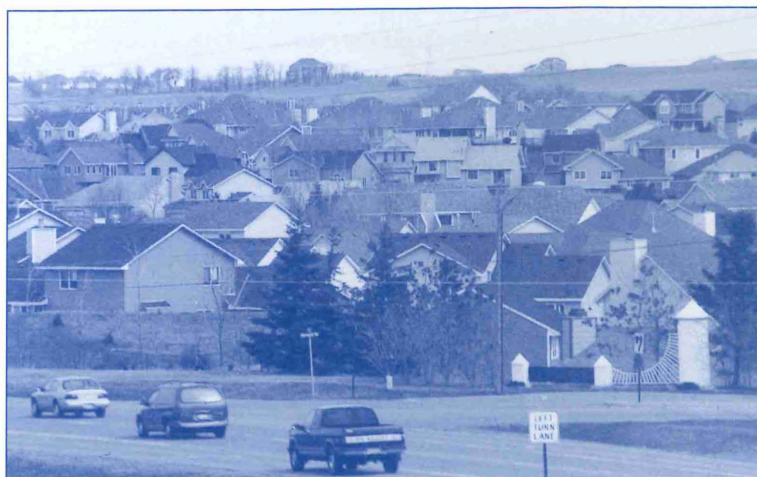
In May the Council published the second edition of its Local Planning Handbook, a step-by-step guide for communities to the comprehensive plan review process (also available on the Council web site). The handbook details the requirements for local land use plans, incorporating changes in regional plans and policies adopted in December 1996, including the Regional Blueprint and Metro 2040 growth strategy.

Updated aerial photographs of the region taken in 1997 were offered to local

communities in late 1997. In 1998 the photographs will be digitized for use in the comprehensive planning process.

As part of its priority to build relationships with communities in the region, the Council created four regional sectors and assigned four sector representatives in 1996. These sector representatives serve as the primary liaison between the Council and local communities, offer technical assistance on planning issues, and help troubleshoot operational issues. In 1997 several “listening sessions” comprised of Council members, sector representatives, and top officials were held with local staff and elected officials to hear concerns and exchange views. Council members and staff pledged to continue to work with local communities to help them tailor comprehensive plans that meet both local needs and regional objectives.

To help communities update their plans, grants totaling \$882,000 were awarded to 128 townships, cities and counties. The grants, allocated from state funds, were awarded to communities that emphasize a commitment to regional planning objectives and that anticipate large growth in the next several decades. The Council also made \$770,000 available for no-interest planning loans for a three-year period.





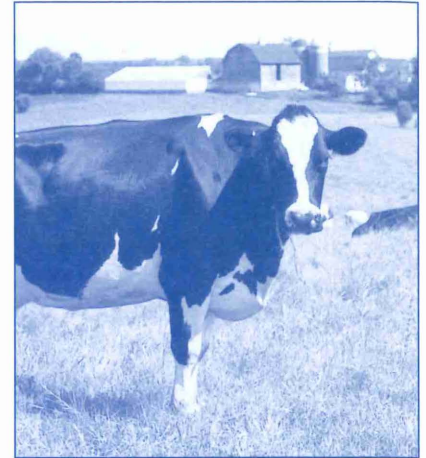
## Council leads economic summit on urban core

In October the Metropolitan Council, in collaboration with Capital City Partnership, Honeywell, 3M and several other groups, held an economic summit on revitalizing and sustaining the urban core. Bankers, developers, business owners, economic development specialists and others involved in urban revitalization met to examine case studies of two areas in the urban core—the South East Minneapolis Industrial Area and the St. Paul Phalen Corridor. Participants toured the areas and discussed characteristics, trends, successes and challenges facing each site.

Participants noted the urban core has advantages for economic development: central location with good access via highways, transit and rails; a large resident labor force; and a strong existing industry and business base. Disadvantages were also discussed: a built-up environment that makes site assembly and expansion difficult; mixed-use commercial-industrial areas that often have incompatible or obsolete uses; polluted land; workforce segments that need training and work-readiness skills; and multiple ownership in commercial-industrial areas that make redevelopment efforts complex.

Participants agreed that public/private partnerships are crucial to tackling redevelopment issues, and that visible leadership is needed to champion revitalization of the core. Additional transit investments are needed to integrate jobs and housing, and funding mechanisms to aid redevelopment need to be simplified and expanded.

The summit was the first of a series of three meetings, the last of which will be held in January 1998, to develop an economic action plan for revitalizing the core.



## Council convenes task force on farmland preservation

A top priority of the Metropolitan Council's Metro 2040 growth strategy is to support agriculture as a long-term land use in the region. In 1997 the Council convened a Permanent Agricultural Land Preservation Task Force comprised of farmers, local elected officials, local planners, county extension and soil conservation staff, county tax assessors, the Land Stewardship Project, and state legislators.

The first of two phases of work was completed in December 1997. The task force established objective criteria and a process to identify agricultural land for possible designation and long-term preservation by local communities.

The group set several goals for farmland preservation efforts, including:

- Identify and preserve farmland based on land suitability criteria, economic viability, and growth management goals
- Promote and maintain a diversity of agricultural production, from food to fiber to oil seed crops
- Maintain a critical mass of suitable farmland to sustain agriculture and related business
- Discourage speculation in land best suited for farming by distinguishing land use designations for urban, rural and agricultural
- Prevent premature conversion of land suited for agriculture to nonfarm use



The actual criteria for identifying land reflect such characteristics as soil quality and proximity to urban development. With the criteria in hand, local governments can take the first step to designating farmland for long-term use as part of their comprehensive planning process.

The second phase of the project will be to evaluate and recommend an appropriate set of tools and practices to actually protect the land as agriculture. Because of changes in property tax laws and land valuations over the past 20 years, tools used in the past—like Green Acres and Agricultural Preserves—no longer serve as much of an incentive for farmland preservation. These tools could be refurbished or new ones developed.

The Council will coordinate the second phase of the project with the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, which received a grant from the Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources to complete a statewide review of agricultural preservation practices. That work is expected to be completed in summer 1998.

## River corridor planning brings communities together

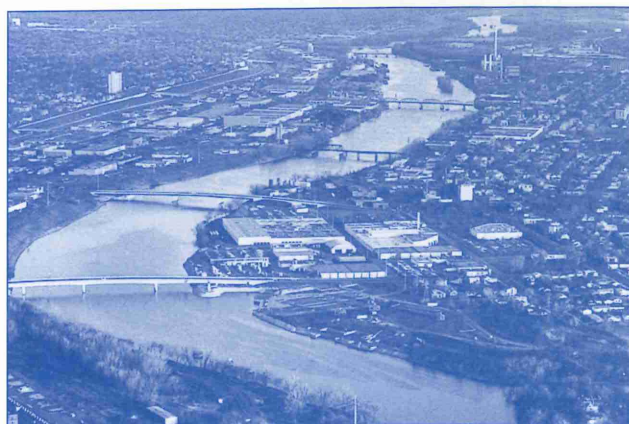
Communities along the Mississippi River are updating plans to protect and enhance the region's premiere natural resource with technical assistance and funds from the Metropolitan Council and the National Park Service (NPS). In 1997 the Council awarded \$280,000 in federal planning funds to 21 communities and one county to help them plan land and water uses along the metropolitan Mississippi River corridor and to help address state and federal policies.

The status of the 72-mile Mississippi River Corridor as a state Critical Area has placed special planning requirements on local governments and regional agencies since 1976. The Mississippi River Critical Area was also designated as the Mississippi

National River and Recreation Area in 1988, and the Council participated in the 1995 adoption of a comprehensive management plan for the corridor. A cross-divisional Council staff team will continue to work with the NPS and Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, the Minnesota Historical Society and other agencies to offer participating communities expertise in water and natural resources, transportation, community development, and geographic information.

Two major events in 1997—a planning workshop and river tour by boat—provided local staff and elected officials with technical assistance and the opportunity to share with each other the unique features of their communities, the planning challenges they face, and some of their ideas for river corridor development. Council staff had ongoing contact with river communities throughout the year.

The partnership gives the Council a unique opportunity to demonstrate how local and regional plans for land use and redevelopment can integrate environmental sensitivity, transportation, recreation and livable communities principles while enhancing the regional economy. The Council will continue to offer workshops and other assistance to river communities, counties and other jurisdictions along the river corridor as they prepare comprehensive plans and Critical Area plan updates for Council review.





## Sustaining environmental quality for future generations

In 1997, Metropolitan Council Environmental Services (MCES) continued implementation of the water resources management policy plan and the updated MCES business plan, with a focus on improving responsiveness to the region and to community and industry customers. The regional water management strategy focuses on watersheds. It balances point and nonpoint source pollution prevention and abatement solutions, leverages results through effective partnerships, and strives for cost- and quality-competitive results.

In 1997 partnerships with industry, local governments, state and federal agencies, nonprofit groups and others helped to achieve compliance with wastewater treatment permits, a high level of water quality in the region, and cost-competitive service rates.

MCES has two roles:

- to support Council-guided regional development; and
- to protect the public health and environment.

Its two mandated core businesses are water resources planning and wastewater collection and treatment.



## *Protecting both the quality and quantity...*

### Conservation, cooperation help to ensure abundant water supply

Abundant water is one of the Twin Cities area's greatest assets for public health, economic vitality, recreational enjoyment and natural beauty. Protecting both the quality and quantity of this resource for future generations is a major focus of the Metropolitan Council's work.

The Council in 1997 concluded a study of the "state of the water supply" in the seven-county region for the legislature. While sufficient water supplies are available to sustain projected growth, some changes in water use and management will be needed to avoid costly capital expenditures and to protect the environment. The Council made 13 recommendations to improve water supply in the 21st century. Among them:

- Encourage water utilities to pursue efficient water use practices, conservation initiatives and joint planning ventures
- Promote public awareness and appreciation of clean water through water education and conservation programs
- Share water supplies across municipal boundaries
- Increase the use of surface water for future supply

The Council concluded that making water supply a fifth "metropolitan system" for planning purposes is not currently necessary. New cooperative efforts among suppliers and government regulatory and planning agencies will be needed to ensure that water is distributed where it is needed.

## 'Crown jewel' of regional park system opens at Lake Minnetonka

Two stunning new regional parks opened in 1997, one on Lake Minnetonka and the other along the St. Croix River. Both illustrate the benefits of partnerships with communities and private interests in preserving natural resources and open spaces in the region.

Lake Minnetonka Regional Park almost wasn't—the controversy surrounding the land acquisition reached the Supreme Court in the late 1980s. But once past that hurdle, the county and local communities established a neighborhood committee to help develop the plans for the park, including roads, traffic levels, and screening. The result is a win for the region, the nearby cities, and the millions of regional park visitors.

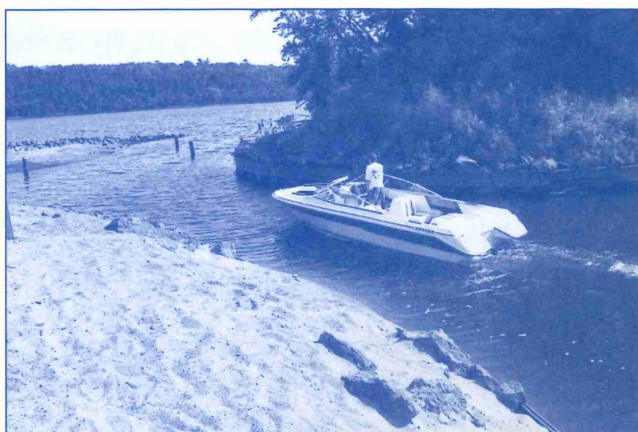
The 292-acre park features boat access, a fishing pier, a sand-bottomed swimming pond, a two-tier creative play area, and a spectacularly designed visitor center featuring displays on Native American and pioneer history.

Across the region along the St. Croix River is the new St. Croix Bluffs Regional Park. Formerly an employee recreation area owned by Ceridian Corporation, the park was created when the company's employee foundation negotiated with Washington County for a transfer of ownership.

Retention of the land as a park was a top priority for the foundation. The park features camping, boat access, group picnic facilities, hiking trails and a conference cottage. A combination of state, regional and county bonds will be used to pay off the cost of the purchase in its entirety quickly rather than over 10 years, saving taxpayers \$895,000 in interest costs.

Visits to regional parks continue to grow, a survey released in 1997 showed. Nearly 16 million visits were made to regional parks in 1996, an increase of 7.4 percent from the previous year. Regional trail use grew even faster. Parks and trails in Minneapolis and St. Paul get the heaviest use, about 60 percent of the total. But use of more outlying parks is growing, showing the highest percentage increases in visits.

The survey showed residents of the region clearly value the investment made in preserving natural areas and developing recreational resources, an investment enjoyed by thousands of visitors from outside the metro area as well.




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*...county and local communities established a neighborhood committee to help develop the plans for the park...*

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## General aviation and the economy

With federal grant assistance the Metropolitan Council in 1997 initiated a study of the economic impact of general aviation (small private and corporate aircraft operations) including the region's "reliever" airports. An advisory group with representatives of local communities, airport users and others will assist with the study. The group will help formulate an economic development strategy for the reliever airport system that local groups could later build on and tailor to their particular needs.

The information gathered will add to the economic studies done on Minneapolis-St. Paul international airport as part of the dual-track process. The study is part of the Council's policy of actively promoting a regional economic strategy to strengthen the area's ability to compete in the international marketplace and to improve the standard of living for its residents. A report is expected by mid-1998.

## Council works with communities around airport

The Metropolitan Council in 1997 continued its work with communities surrounding Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport (MSP) on land use compatibility and noise mitigation measures as the Metropolitan

Airports Commission (MAC) undertakes a major expansion of the airport.

The Council is participating in a working group that includes representatives from cities near the airport, the MAC, the airlines, and the legislature. With a focus on noise mitigation and ways to stabilize and revitalize neighborhoods around the airport, the group is:

- Assessing the potential impacts of low-frequency noise associated with aircraft taxiing and ground operations
- Coordinating community redevelopment needed because of safety and noise impacts
- Coordinating efforts to replace lost recreational resources—like nearby golf courses and ballfields—due to airport expansion

The Council is providing technical assistance to communities around the region's airports as they update their comprehensive land use plans as required by Dec. 31, 1998. The updates will align with the Regional Blueprint and its Metro 2040 growth strategy, and a revised airport policy plan adopted by the Council in 1996.

## Council reviews MAC plans

The Metropolitan Council in 1997 completed a review of the MAC's annual capital improvement program. Most improvements in the plan represent the initial stages of projects to implement the MSP 2010 plan. The plan includes adding a new 5,000-space parking ramp, expanding a concourse, and building a new charter terminal with ultimate expansion to six gates. The plan also calls for finalizing acquisition of the Rich Acres and New Ford Town neighborhoods of Richfield in preparation for construction of the new "north-south" runway. The final environmental impact statement on the acquisition is expected to be completed in early 1998.



## Federal funds allocated equally among highways and alternatives

The Metropolitan Council in 1997 allocated more than \$66 million in federal funds for transportation projects to be constructed in 2001 and 2002. The funds were split almost equally between roadway projects (\$32.4 million) and alternative modes, including transit, bikeways and walkways, and travel demand management projects (\$32.2 million).

Under federal law, the Council is responsible for allocating funds from three major programs: surface transportation, congestion mitigation and air quality, and transportation enhancement. A total of 110 projects were submitted for consideration, and funding was approved for 36 projects.

Major projects approved include purchase of buses for Metro Transit; a new four-lane crossing over 35W in Bloomington at 79th and 80th Sts.; a new transit hub for St. Paul's west end; a region-wide travel demand management and commuter alliance program; reconstruction of Hwy. 100 from Indiana Ave. to 50th Ave.; and transit service expansion in the I-35W north corridor.

## Council supports coordinated statewide planning

While the Metro 2040 growth plan puts strategic limits on how the region will accommodate expected growth in jobs, households and population in coming decades, development is surging just outside the seven-county metro area. The 1997 Legislature created a statewide Community-Based Planning Advisory Council to develop a framework for voluntary community-based planning and the incentives and tools to implement it. The Metropolitan Council has an ex-officio seat on the advisory council.

Even if the metro area can attract most of its projected growth into the urban area, there's little to stop growth from leapfrogging into adjacent counties—gobbling up rural land, farmland and open spaces, and creating demand for millions, even billions of dollars of new services and infrastructure. Under the new law, tools will be developed to help counties adjacent to the metro area plan for the growth effectively. Counties or joint planning districts near the metro area will be required to coordinate their plans with the Council based on the Regional Blueprint and other development policies.

In 1998 the Metropolitan Council will continue to work with the advisory council on land use, development and infrastructure issues in surrounding counties. The goal is to encourage good planning and thoughtful choices about how land, infrastructure and services are used both inside and outside the region—to preserve the region's excellent quality of life without unnecessary and extraordinary expenditures.

Also, in 1997, the Legislature created the Advisory Council on Regional and Local Government, charging it with making recommendations on the appropriate roles and responsibilities of local and regional government in the metropolitan area. The Council is a participant. The group's recommendations are due to the Legislature in July 1998.







### Livable Communities Act— regional investment leverages jobs, affordable housing, better communities

Now two years old, the Metropolitan Livable Communities Act has led to significant community development that supports economic vitality, job growth, and efficient use of regional services. The region has benefited from more affordable housing, and housing that meets the needs of people at different stages in their lives—called life-cycle housing.

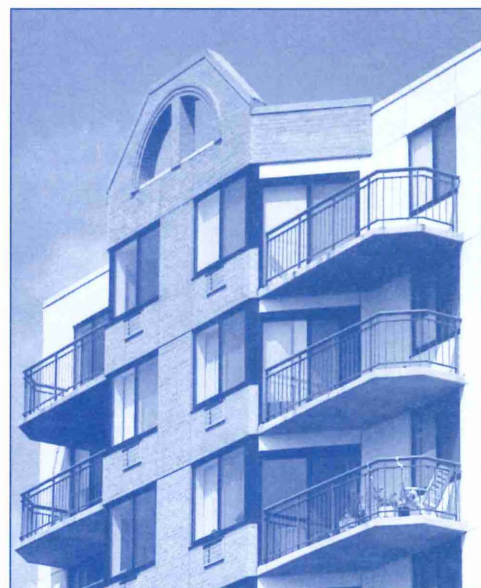
In 1997, 97 communities worked in partnership with the Metropolitan Council, representing more than 90 percent of targeted communities—those where job growth is highest and affordable and life-cycle housing is most needed. Collectively, the 97 communities have voluntarily set goals to produce 12,600 affordable rental units and nearly 69,000 units for ownership through the year 2010, consistent with projected growth. These communities have established housing goals in cooperation with the Council, and are eligible to compete for dollars in the Livable Communities Fund.

The fund offers financial incentives as leverage for other public and private investment to: provide more affordable and life-cycle housing; clean up polluted sites; and promote creative development and redevelopment that uses land, services and infrastructure more efficiently.

### Creating a better mix of housing

In 1997 the Council allocated \$625,000 from the Local Housing Incentives Account to assist three communities to expand affordable housing. In Eden Prairie, 32 rental family townhomes will be constructed, with approximately \$3.7 million leveraged from other sources. In Plymouth, 64 rental housing units affordable to variety of incomes will be built, with an additional \$5.3 million in other funds. In Lakeville, land will be acquired and 30 family townhomes built; an additional \$3.5 million was leveraged for the project.

The Minnesota Housing Finance Agency and the Minneapolis-St. Paul Family Housing Fund were partners with the Council to coordinate housing investment in the region and simplify the application process. The City of Minneapolis and the region teamed up to create more affordable housing throughout the seven-county area, with \$117 million in federal dollars targeted to carry out terms of the 1994 Hollman lawsuit settlement. The Council offers funding priority to communities that provide housing subsidized under the terms of the Hollman settlement.





## Cleaning up polluted sites

Polluted sites are a major obstacle to economic vitality in the Twin Cities area, especially in older parts of the region. To spur redevelopment and create jobs, the Tax Base Revitalization Account provides up to \$8 million annually to clean up land blighted by industrial pollution.

In the first of two funding cycles for 1997, the Council allocated a total of \$3.6 million to clean up 36 acres at six sites in Fridley, St. Paul and Minneapolis. In December 1997, the Council awarded nearly \$4.3 million to clean up 82 acres at five sites in Minneapolis, St. Paul and Roseville.

Communities participating in the Livable Communities program are also eligible for state brownfield cleanup funds allocated through the Minnesota Department of Trade and Economic Development. The 1997 Legislature appropriated \$7 million for general cleanup in the current biennium, plus an additional \$12.4 million specifically for petroleum cleanup.

Cleaning polluted land provides substantial returns. Land that has lost most or all of its taxable value becomes productive again, adding to the property tax base. Jobs are created through the cleanup, redevelopment and new businesses that result; the jobs lead to income tax payments. Savings in welfare costs occur when job seekers are hired. Conservative estimates for total return on the investment of Livable Communities funds is just three years after redevelopment is complete.

An estimated 2,000 new jobs will be created by one project alone—the redevelopment of the Sears site at Lake St. and Chicago Ave. in Minneapolis. The Council in 1997 awarded \$2.7 million to Minneapolis and the Minneapolis Community Development Agency to clean hazardous waste and asbestos from the former Sears Tower complex. Redevelopment uses will include light

industrial, office, educational and retail, as well as an eight-story parking ramp, public plaza and Metro Transit hub.

Council funds will leverage \$85 million in private investment for the Sears site, with an increased net tax capacity estimated at \$1.53 million. An average hourly wage of \$10 is estimated for the 4,000 jobs projected for the redevelopment once it is 70 percent occupied. (About half the jobs will be new, the other half transfers from other locations.) The city is committed to ensuring that local residents are placed in new jobs created as a result of the redevelopment as much as possible.

In its two years of existence, the Tax Base Revitalization Account has provided a total of \$14.3 million in funds for cleanup of 218 acres, leveraging \$241 million in private redevelopment investment and creating nearly 4,400 new jobs. The total increase in net tax capacity is estimated at nearly \$7 million.

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*...Council allocated  
\$625,000 from the Local  
Housing Incentives Account...*

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## Creating more livable communities

The Livable Communities Demonstration Account provides loans and grants to help communities develop compact, higher-density neighborhoods with certain “livability” features: walkable streets; parks and open space; a mix of housing and commercial development; proximity to transit and other alternatives to driving alone; and a range of housing types and costs to ensure that residents can live near their work places. The goal is to implement higher density development practices that reduce urban sprawl and foster a stronger sense of community.

In 1997 the Council awarded nearly \$4 million in grants to 10 projects through the demonstration account. They include: Valley Square redevelopment, Golden Valley (\$510,000); I-35W Corridor Coalition (\$131,250); Phillips Park Initiative, Minneapolis (\$700,000); Augustana Village, Minneapolis (\$550,000); Richfield Rediscovered Apartment Remodeling Program (\$575,000); Brewery Neighborhood, St. Paul (\$750,000); Brickyard Redevelopment, Chaska (\$344,100); The Village, Lino Lakes (\$220,000); Town Center/Gravel Mining Area, Maple Grove (\$150,000); and Welcome Neighborhood Project, Crystal (\$50,000). Council grants leveraged more than \$128 million in other public and private funds for the projects.

Each year, the Council issues its annual city-by-city “report card” on affordable and life-cycle housing in the Twin Cities area. Communities were surveyed during the year to determine the number of

affordable owner and rental units that have been produced since the Legislature adopted the Livable Communities Act in 1995. Efforts communities are making to promote public/private partnerships to produce more affordable housing, and actions they have taken to reduce the cost of housing by changing zoning or other standards in their comprehensive plans, are also part of this regional report card.

Since its inception two years ago, grants from the Livable Communities Fund have leveraged more than \$776 million in other public and private investments.

## Homebuyers in targeted neighborhoods get tax breaks

A two-year pilot program to help strengthen older neighborhoods in the region is providing tax breaks to residents who purchased homes in the neighborhoods between September 1995 and July 1997.

The Home Buyers Tax Break Program is part of the Livable Communities Act, and targets four communities or neighborhoods: Columbia Heights, Minneapolis’ Folwell and McKinley neighborhoods, and St. Paul’s West Side. Nearly 1,000 homes in these core-city neighborhoods were eligible for the program. Its aims were simple: to help people of modest means acquire a home; to strengthen older neighborhoods by introducing responsible, productive residents; and to foster a sense of community.

The program provides annual exemptions to married people who file jointly (up to \$15,000), single people (up to \$10,000), and single heads of households (up to \$12,500). The tax breaks, subject to income limits, are available for up to five years.

The Council will evaluate the cost and effectiveness of the program over the short and long term. An initial report to the Legislature on the program is planned in early 1998.

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*...Council awarded  
nearly \$4 million  
in grants to 10 projects...*

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# Regional Competitiveness

## Council increases competitiveness

Making the Metropolitan Council a model of efficient operations is one of the agency's top priorities. In 1997, the Council launched an internal feasibility process to determine which activities it could open to managed competition between Council employees and outside vendors.

Managed competition is just one of several strategies the Council uses to deliver the highest quality services at the lowest possible price to the public. As Council functions are evaluated for effectiveness and efficiency, other options may be pursued first. Functions may be re-engineered—dramatically redesigned to improve results. If they are already adequately competitive, they may undergo continuous quality improvement—incremental changes over time, relying on customer feedback. Functions not deemed core to the Council's mission and readily available for purchase may be directly contracted to a private vendor.

Under managed competition, public employees compete against private vendors for the opportunity to perform specific services. While all Council functions will be evaluated for competitiveness, only a few will engage in direct competition between employees and private providers. But in all cases, the evaluation process instills competitive thinking organization-wide

and leads to improvements. The public wins regardless of who ends up delivering the service.

Each division at the Council is required to generate ideas for managed competition on a regular basis. In the first round of the Council's managed competition process in 1997, two projects were identified and determined to be feasible for managed competition: office copying services at Mears Park Centre and Heywood, and groundskeeping and snow removal for sewer interceptor lift and metering stations.

These pilot projects then moved into the next steps: preparation of a draft request for proposals (RFP), an analysis of transition impacts, and issuance of a final RFP. In 1998, staff proposals will be developed, all submitted proposals will be evaluated, and a contract awarded. Performance of the winning contract will be monitored over time and audited for service cost and quality. In the meantime, new projects will be proposed for managed competition and another cycle of the process will begin.

No layoffs are expected from managed competition, since most jobs are protected by union bargaining agreements, although work assignments could change. Council employees working in areas considered for competition will be given reasonable time or assistance to improve procedures before competing with the private sector.



The Council envisions no specific dollar or percentage savings from managed competition. However, the Council will allow up to a 10 percent cost advantage for employee proposals. This compensates for the difficulty in precisely evaluating the costs of in-house activities and the cost of disruption in transferring operations to an outside vendor.

The Council strives to remain neutral in choosing between public employees or private vendors in a managed competition situation. It will also entertain proposals from private vendors that partner with public employees. In fact, that's exactly what may happen with sludge treatment at the Blue Lake Wastewater Treatment Plant, where a new solids handling facility is proposed. A request for proposals was developed that will allow a private firm to design, build, own and operate the facility. The private firm may opt to partner with current Council employees to operate it.

To design its managed competition process, the Council carefully studied what a dozen jurisdictions around the U.S. have done, and created a hybrid that suits the unique role and responsibilities of the Council. The outcome of the pilot projects will help determine if adjustments need to be made in the future.

The Council will ask the 1998 Legislature for three changes in law to increase competitiveness:

- Authority to compensate employees from the savings they achieve through implementing proposals that deliver services at lower than established costs

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*...competition is just  
one of several strategies  
the Council uses...*

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- Opportunity to enter into cooperative agreements to provide services to other organizations, particularly other public agencies
- Flexibility to allow outside proposals for wastewater facility projects to be kept private until final offers are on the table. Proposals with public/private partnerships are currently open to scrutiny, thus putting Council employees who are part of a proposal at a disadvantage.

The competitive approach is not new to the Council. For example, by rescheduling work shifts and redesigning work processes in wastewater treatment, savings to the public reached \$2 million each year. In transit, matching customer demand with service levels has led to redesigned service and use of smaller vehicles. Several poorly performing routes were restructured and/or awarded to private vendors, with an expected savings of \$2 million over two years. These savings will be used to expand service on high-use transit routes.

## Wastewater facilities continue near-perfect performance

Weathering one of the worst flood seasons in history, Metropolitan Council Environmental Services (MCES) attained 99.9 percent overall compliance with permits for nine wastewater treatment plants in 1997. The plants treated approximately 107.5 billion gallons of wastewater from 2.5 million residents in 104 communities this year. Excellent preparation and hard work by employees during the spring floods kept the facilities operating at peak performance.

The 1997 performance continues MCES' excellent record. At the 1997 annual meeting of the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA), seven of MCES' nine treatment plants received Certificates of Commen-





dation for outstanding performance in 1996—awards granted only to plants that achieved full compliance with their permits during the year. Facilities recognized were Blue Lake, Chaska, Empire, Hastings, Rosemount, Seneca and Stillwater. The compliance record for all nine plants averaged 99.8 percent in 1996. The successful performance of the regional wastewater treatment system also led to environmental awards from the Association of Metropolitan Sewerage Agencies (AMSA) in 1997. Seven plants received Gold Awards from AMSA for perfect compliance with environmental requirements, and two received Silver Awards for near-perfect compliance.

### Council achieves highly competitive wastewater treatment service rates

In 1997 Metropolitan Council Environmental Services (MCES), through implementation of its business and resource allocation plans, continued to become more efficient, better organized and more accountable to the public. In 1997 MCES treated more than 300 million gallons of wastewater daily, at an average cost per household approximately 29 percent less than in similarly-sized service areas nationwide.

With a goal of no rate increases beyond inflation through the year 2000, despite

increasing wastewater flows, the Council is holding the line on costs through more efficient operations. Cost savings of up to \$2 million in 1997 will be rebated to communities.

In June 1997 the Council approved a new Master Plan for the Metro Plant that identifies capital improvements needed over the next 20 years to keep the plant operating efficiently and to meet the region's water quality goals.

A multi-year re-engineering of business systems and protocols at the Metropolitan Wastewater Treatment Plant continued in 1997. This re-engineering effort of MCES management and labor has drawn together more than 250 employees from across the division to plan and implement changes in technology, use of labor and how work gets done.

The Council is also keeping costs competitive by developing alternative procurement options for capital needs and labor. MCES developed a new approach to procurement made possible by the 1997 Legislature. A new law allows MCES to consider such factors as risk, technical merits, past experience and environmental compliance records when evaluating proposals.

In 1997 MCES used its new procurement process to request proposals for the design, construction, operation and possible ownership of a new solids stabilization facility for the Blue Lake Wastewater Treatment Plant. The goal is to make the best use of limited public resources, letting the market determine the most efficient and effective technology, and bring the project on line more quickly. Vendors have the option to partner with MCES employees to operate and maintain the facility, which can be located either at Blue Lake or elsewhere. Overall management of the facility would be the responsibility of the vendor. Use of MCES staff for operation is one of the criteria to be considered in the selection process.



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*...reducing capital costs over  
20 years from \$200 million  
to \$100 million...*

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The Council will ask the 1998 Legislature for the authority to keep proposals for wastewater facility projects private until final offers are on the table. Currently, proposals are open to scrutiny by competitors, which would hinder the competitive negotiation process.

### Plant improvements will mean better air quality

Planning for a new solids processing facility at the Metropolitan Wastewater Treatment Plant in St. Paul got underway in 1997. The need to replace the plant's aging incinerators was identified in the facility's master plan, approved in January.

A project team of Metro plant staff, other Metropolitan Council Environmental Services (MCES) staff and consultants studied a variety of solids processing technologies, and decided to further explore two options: incineration, and heat drying of the sludge, in which pellets are created for use as fertilizer.

The team is meeting with business and environmental groups, cities and other agencies for input on the two options. The project improvements will make the facility more streamlined, easier to operate and will greatly reduce air emissions.

A decision on which technology to pursue will be made in 1998, and the appropriate permits will be obtained. The new solids processing facility is expected to be operational in 2005.

### Council adopts phosphorus strategy

Phosphorus is an essential nutrient for plant and animal growth. But in large amounts, phosphorus can cause excessive algae growth, which damages water quality. In order to reduce the amount of phosphorus entering the region's lakes and rivers, the Metropolitan Council is developing a strategy that addresses both point and nonpoint sources over the long term.

To reduce phosphorus from its nine wastewater treatment plants (point sources), the Council strategy sets an initial goal of one milligram per liter as an annual average in the treated water that is discharged to either the Minnesota or Mississippi Rivers. The Council proposes to phase in phosphorus removal at the same time it constructs facility expansions, reducing capital costs over 20 years from \$200 million to \$100 million, in addition to minimizing operating costs. Linking plant upgrades for regional growth with facilities for environmental improvement stretches capital dollars and keeps costs to ratepayers affordable.

Phosphorus reduction at treatment plants won't be sufficient for long-term water quality improvement. More diffuse sources of phosphorus, such as runoff from agricultural land, must be addressed as well. In partnership with other agencies, the Council is developing information about the best ways to control nonpoint phosphorus pollution. Once more information is available, the Council, in conjunction with its partners, can make decisions about how to maximize environmental benefit for the cost of additional point or nonpoint source controls.

### Council streamlines sewer billing system

Beginning in January 1998 metropolitan area community wastewater collection and



treatment billings are based on actual, rather than estimated, wastewater flows. The new system resulted from recommendations by the 1995 Sewer Rate/Cost Allocation Task Force, composed of community and industry representatives. The 1997 Minnesota Legislature approved changes to make the new system possible.

In fall 1997 Metropolitan Council Environmental Services (MCES) held three workshops around the metro area for community finance and public works staffs. Billing changes and how they will affect communities' budgeting and rate-setting processes were discussed.

The new system means that communities will have consistent sewer rates throughout the year and pay on a more real-time basis. The billing process is simplified, some variability in yearly charges is eliminated, and cash flow management becomes more critical.

Communities will receive historical flow information, an estimated flow range for the upcoming year, and worksheets to help determine the flow for budgeting purposes. Cities not metered will still be billed on estimated flows. Current value or local government debt service credits will be issued as checks in July of every year until the liability is paid. Previously, communities received the credits in the form of a reduction to the estimated monthly billings.

## Task force looks at equity of industrial sewer rates

The Metropolitan Council's Industrial Rate System Task Force developed recommendations about the billing system for industrial users of metropolitan area wastewater treatment.

In 1997 industries paid almost \$24 million for sewer service, about 14 percent of the region's total sewer service costs. The

current industrial rate system was created 20 years ago; the last major modifications were made in the mid-1980s. The goal is to ensure equity between industrial and municipal users of wastewater treatment services in the Twin Cities.

In the current system about 850 local industries hold permits issued by MCES, which specify discharge limits, pretreatment requirements and prohibited wastes. More than 300 industries pay additional "strength charges" based on the composition of their discharge; special fees are charged for hauled waste and contaminated groundwater discharges. All industries pay annual permit fees.

A key element of the task force study was to analyze alternative rate systems in light of the Council's Regional Blueprint, which establishes long-term regional goals for economic development and environmental protection.

The 14-member task force, formed in September 1996, is composed of industry and community representatives. The Council will hear its recommendations early in 1998.

## New treatment plant: public involvement shapes plant capacity, site

The Metropolitan Council and the City of Cottage Grove agreed to a 15-million-gallon-per-day (MGD) wastewater treatment plant on the 10-acre site of the existing facility in Cottage Grove. The negotiated agreement satisfies both regional capacity needs and community preferences. Participation by local officials and residents, and cooperation by the 3M Company, led to the decision.

The new South Washington County Treatment Plant will serve projected growth in Cottage Grove, eastern Woodbury and southern Lake Elmo to 2050. An earlier



proposal called for a 45-acre site, including a 150-foot buffer zone, with initial capacity of 10 MGD and a maximum capacity of 30 MGD. Three major factors allowed the Council to scale down the project and site it on 10 acres.

The first was that a concurrent study of the future of the Metropolitan Wastewater Treatment Plant in St. Paul found that with upgrades, the plant will be capable of serving its defined service area until at least 2040; therefore, no diversion of wastewater to a new South Washington County facility will be necessary. In addition, 3M Company granted easements on its property so that the new facility can be constructed while the current facility continues to operate. Finally, a more compact facility design will make building on the smaller site possible.

Public participation was a hallmark of the siting process. At the outset the Metropolitan Council formed a community advisory task force that met jointly with a working group of Council members. Initially 15 potential sites were identified, a list that after more study was narrowed to five. What followed were many presentations to local officials, more meetings with local staff, informational meetings with the public and extensive media coverage. The Council chose three sites in Cottage Grove for further consideration, but at the urging of local officials, continued to explore other sites. Working together, the solution emerged.

The project also demonstrated how the Council's varied responsibilities—including environmental protection, growth management, providing efficient services and fostering partnerships—are integrated to serve the region.

The estimated capital cost of the wastewater interceptor and the 15 MGD plant is \$90 million. That's about \$15 or \$20 million less to 2050 than the earlier proposal, with comparable total costs projected over the

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## *...Treatment Plant will serve projected growth in Cottage Grove...*

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long term. Eventually, the Council will have to look more closely at the needs of a broader area, including Dakota County, focusing on 2050 and beyond.

The new facility will be equipped with state of the art odor control and noise reduction technology. Solids will be trucked to the Metro Plant in St. Paul for processing at a rate of about 10 vehicles a day. Detailed plans for both the plant and the interceptor that will serve Cottage Grove and Woodbury, initially, will be developed in 1998. The new plant is expected to be operational in 2002.

## Redesigning transit for better service, more efficient use of resources

The Metropolitan Council in 1997 continued to implement Transit Redesign, a plan adopted in 1996 to improve transit services while holding the line on the limited transit budget.

Transit changes in Anoka County, Woodbury, south Washington County and the suburbs on the eastern side of Lake Minnetonka are all variations on a theme: putting the right-sized vehicle and type of service in the appropriate areas, coordinating local service to provide improved circulation, and linking local service with faster access to other parts of the region.

For example, in South Washington County, three new local neighborhood circulator



routes were set up in Cottage Grove, Newport and St. Paul Park. During the morning rush period, small 12-passenger buses pick up commuters and take them to Park and Ride lots for transfers to express service on regular Metro Transit buses into downtown St. Paul. In the afternoon, the routes are reversed. In addition, two new express routes that offer local service on one trip each morning were established.

For trips within the communities a new South County Circulator was established for dial-a-ride service between 6 a.m. and 7 p.m. With 24-hour advance reservations, passengers can travel in small buses to clinics, shopping centers, and other local destinations. In addition, local fixed-route service is offered hourly from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. with stops at schools, city halls, apartment complexes and shopping centers.

The Council worked closely with local communities to restructure and coordinate delivery of service with providers. Local service is often provided by private firms or not-for-profit agencies. Duplication and highly subsidized inefficient service is eliminated. The savings can be used to improve service in Metro Transit's core market areas.

For example, additional buses can be put on routes that have high demand. The result is better service and the potential for additional riders. The Council estimates an additional 375,000 rides will be taken annually as a result of Transit Redesign.

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*...Council estimates  
an additional 375,000  
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annually...*

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Listening to the community led to another valuable partnership and better transit service in 1997. People in the Phillips neighborhood of Minneapolis expressed concern about being cut off from the Minnehaha Ave. shopping area because of road construction on Hiawatha Ave. In response, the Council, including Metro Transit, and the Minnesota Department of Transportation and three businesses—Target, Cub and Rainbow—are funding a new local circulator service. Called the Phillips Shopper, the 10-passenger Metro Transit buses run continuously from 8 a.m. to 11 p.m. on Wednesdays and Saturdays to bring people from Phillips to the shopping center. The community identified the prime shopping days and the best pick-up spots.

A major service restructuring occurred in mid-1997 as Metro Transit resumed operation of several bus routes, formerly operated by Medicine Lake Lines, at the University of Minnesota.

The university wanted to reduce its financial commitment for campus transportation and looked to Metro Transit. A plan that would keep all commuter service intact, reduce the university's transit expenses and bring additional work for Metro Transit drivers was developed.

Metro Transit eliminated inefficient and duplicative routes, and undertook major marketing efforts to attract more riders, including a Transit Fair, free ride coupons, increased advertising, and pocket schedules distributed in dorms and at bus stops.

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*...Metro Transit....carried  
61.9 million passengers—205,000  
on an average weekday.*

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### Council audits transportation system

An evaluation of the region's transportation system mandated by the 1996 Legislature found that the region's road and bridge system is in generally good condition, traffic congestion is growing, and transit is operating efficiently.

The Metropolitan Council's Twin Cities Performance Audit focused on the seven-county area and neighboring counties—nine in Minnesota and three in Wisconsin—in which five percent or more of residents commute into the region for work. The audit evaluated the commuting area's ability to meet the region's needs for efficient and effective transportation of goods and people, evaluated future trends and their impacts on the region's transportation system, and made recommendations for improving the system. Benchmarks for future audits, required every two years, were established.

The audit found that during peak travel times, 35 percent of freeway lane miles



and 55 percent of principal arterial lane miles are congested. This congestion resulted in 43.5 million hours of delay for the region's residents in 1994, or about 20 hours per capita. In a 500-household survey, 73 percent of those surveyed said that congestion was an important issue to some degree. Sixty-seven percent said that congestion had gotten worse in the last five years.

On the transit side, Metro Transit is the dominant carrier in the region, carrying 90 percent of transit riders. In 1996, it carried 61.9 million passengers—205,000 on an average weekday. Metro Transit carried 36.5 passengers per revenue hour, compared to the peer group average of 32.4. It received \$36 operating assistance per capita in the service area, compared to a peer group average of \$77. Metro Transit recovered 37.4 percent of transit operating costs from the farebox, compared to a peer group average of 24.2 percent. Of surveyed households, 80 percent said they were satisfied with current transit service to some degree.

The audit also included information on the efficiency and effectiveness of freight facilities, intermodal facilities, railroads, waterways and air cargo. The next full performance audit will be conducted in 2001, with an audit of the transit system scheduled for 1999.

### Proposed east metro bus garage would improve service, save tax dollars

In 1998 the Council will request \$12 million from the Legislature to help construct a new 200-bus garage in St. Paul.

Metro Transit would use the building as a base for east-metro bus operations.



Locating the facility closer to downtown St. Paul where most bus routes begin or end would save Metro Transit operating dollars by cutting the number of out-of-service miles buses travel to and from the garage.

The new garage would replace the current Snelling Garage, built in 1907 for streetcar manufacture. Although renovated in 1982, the facility is outdated, inefficient and beset with air quality problems. Metro Transit was forced to reduce the Snelling bus complement from 228 to 185 after federal inspectors found winter air quality insufficient. Owing to its age and condition, consultants estimated it would cost \$15 million to bring the structure up to standard.

The new garage will cost \$28 million. Commitments of \$10 million from the state and another \$6 million in federal funds already have been made.

The Council will also request \$16 million in funding for bus purchases, transit stations, metered ramp bypasses and equipment needed to operate and maintain transit service. The \$16 million would make up the difference between the Governor's 1997 biennial recommendation of \$46 million and the 1997 Legislature's \$30 million authorization.

An additional request of \$4.5 million in state bonds will be made to upgrade the Council's transit communications and control center. The center has outdated equipment, which must be replaced to enable Metro Transit to take advantage of the reach and efficiency of the new regional 800 megahertz radio communications system.



## Council seeks state bond funds for parks

Because state funding has kept well abreast with park development needs in recent years, the Council will reduce its bonding request to the 1998 Legislature to \$9.8 million, compared with \$14.7 million in the 1995-97 biennium. Combined with \$6.5 million from the Council, the state bonds will fund the following projects:

- Renovating the Como Park streetcar station as a visitor center
- Rehabilitating the Harriet Island picnic pavilion and surrounding area
- Building or improving trails or trailheads in parks around the region
- Road and bridge construction in Minnehaha Regional Park
- Rebuilding the swimming pond at Elm Creek Park Reserve
- Expanding the boat launch at Lake Byllesby Park
- Improving roads at Minnewashta and Rice Creek Chain of Lakes Parks
- Repaying the cost of acquiring St. Croix Bluffs early to reduce interest payments
- Picnic, swimming and camping improvements at Rice Creek Chain of Lakes Park

## Year 2000— Council tackles toughest technical challenge

Like any other business or household that relies on computers or programmed electronic devices to do its work, the Metropolitan Council faces a tough technical challenge in the next two years: preparing for the 21st century.

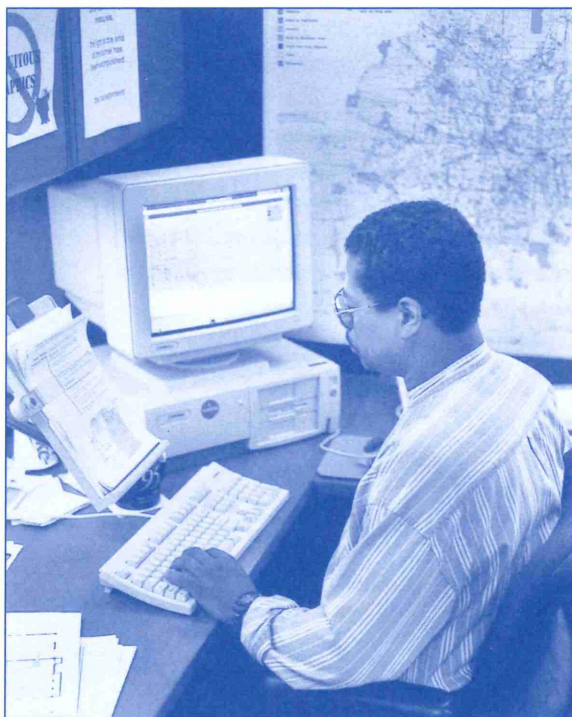
Computers and electronically controlled or timed devices, like instruments at a wastewater metering station that measure wastewater flows, have intelligence built into them that operate or activate by date. Usually, this date information is programmed in just two digits—the last two of the year. Until the year 2000, the numbers in each succeeding year are greater than the year just past.

But with the change in century, when “00” follows “99,” confusion will set in. Some systems will assume the year is 1900, and send inaccurate data out to other

systems. Some devices may shut down, as they are programmed to do when they get an “unexpected” result. Functions as diverse as payroll, pollution control and transit service delivery will be affected.

In 1997 the Metropolitan Council established an internal Year 2000 project team to develop and carry out business solutions. The first step was to assess the scope and impact of the problem at the Council and make plans for conversion to 21st century-friendly technology. The Council hired a consultant to help staff identify and assess all the programs and equipment where date is an important piece of information, and determine if the operation is dependent on a simple two-digit year. The assessment covers thousands of computer programs and pieces of equipment in Council office buildings, at wastewater treatment plants, and at transit facilities and on buses.

The next step will be to determine which systems can be renovated, which will need to be replaced immediately, and which will have to be eliminated or replaced in the long term. The team, in concert with senior management, will establish priorities and match available resources and staffing. Ongoing communication between management, employees, business partners, consultants and vendors will be key to the success of the project. Changes will be implemented by the end of 1998 for testing and adjustment in 1999.





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*Implementing transitways  
is a priority...*

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## Regional Mobility

### Exclusive transitway to link downtown Minneapolis with airport

A new transitway linking downtown Minneapolis, the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport and the Mall of America got on the fast track in 1997. The transitway will provide two transit lanes separated from the main roadway, running adjacent to Hiawatha Ave./Hwy. 55, and will serve as exclusive bus lanes.

Implementing transitways is a priority for the Metropolitan Council. Transitways reduce congestion, make transit more attractive, move people more quickly and efficiently, protect air quality, and better serve people who are dependent on transit for jobs and economic independence.

Transitways will play a key role in accommodating the region's projected growth in coming decades. By the year 2020, it is expected that an additional 2.6 million trips per day will be taken on the region's roadways, for a total of 13 million trips daily. Regional highways and freeways are near capacity now, and money and land are simply not available to build our way out of congestion. The region's economic growth is contingent in part on the ability of its transportation system to move people, goods and services. Transitway investments will save the region millions of dollars.

The right-of-way needed for the Hiawatha Transitway has already been reserved for future light rail transit (LRT). Funding for LRT is not currently available, but the bus transitway could be converted to include LRT when it is appropriate. Construction of the bus transitway can occur alongside reconstruction of Hiawatha Avenue, now in progress.

Public meetings on the Hiawatha Transitway are expected to occur in early 1998, with a final plan expected in March. Construction from downtown to the airport will cost an estimated \$40 million, and could begin as soon as 1999, with operations starting in 2001.

Two other corridors are already the subject of study for potential transitways: the Riverview corridor between downtown St. Paul and the international airport, and a North corridor between Northtown and downtown Minneapolis. The Council will work with local governments to help them take advantage of the economic development opportunities that transitways bring to communities.

As it implements transitways, the Council will coordinate them with other transit facilities and advantages, like park and ride lots, transit hubs and stations, speed limits and signal preemption.

## Regional transit pursues 2 million more riders

The 1997 Legislature gave the region's transit providers a challenge: bus ridership must reach 131 million rides for the two years ending June 30, 1999. That's two million rides above current levels, and it's the result the Legislature wants after allocating an additional \$9.8 million in funding for transit during the period.

The region is using several strategies to meet the goal. Some are already in place, like Transit Redesign, the Guaranteed Ride Home Program, improved security on Metro Transit buses, and the Metropolitan Council's pilot program of subsidized bus passes at the University of Minnesota.

In addition, Metro Transit will add 30 new trips to existing routes to improve service frequency and reliability. The bus fleet is being modernized; 165 new buses, in a total fleet of 888, will be delivered in 1998. The new buses include low-floor models for easier boarding for wheelchair passengers and people with limited mobility. These buses will be used on high-density routes.

To maximize every ridership opportunity, Metro Transit in 1997 initiated Operation 131. The project has a coordinating team and several work teams, each charged with looking at a particular aspect of transit operations: service enhancement; employee communication and involvement; quality; fare structures and incentives; and marketing. Two additional teams work with other transit providers and build ridesharing.

Operation 131 got off to a good start. Metro Transit ridership from July 1 to Oct. 31 was 21.1 million rides, about 3.2 percent ahead of the needed pace. A media campaign to attract new customers to the region's 23 transit providers will get underway in 1998.

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*...Metro Transit  
will add 30 new trips  
to existing routes...*

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## New name, new leader behind the wheel

The bus system that provides 95 percent of all regional bus service in the Twin Cities area started answering to a leaner name in 1997: Metro Transit. The name change made it easier for customers to remember and find in the phone book, and it's a more pronounceable moniker to identify the service provided and the area served.

The new name is an early initiative of Metro Transit's new general manager, Art Leahy, who was hired by the Council in 1997. Leahy comes from Los Angeles with a long history in transit. Most recently, he served more than three years as executive officer of bus and rail service for the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority. He had worked his way up from his first job in transit as a bus driver in the early 1970s in southern California.

Building on a good basic system, Leahy is focusing on improving morale in the transit work force, building top-notch customer service and increasing ridership to make transit an excellent investment in the region's economic growth. With Leahy's guidance the Council reached a new three-year contract with Amalgamated Transit Union workers effective through July 31, 2000. Wages increase three percent each year of the contract.



## Transit's 'zero tolerance' policy improves bus security

Higher police visibility on Metro Transit buses, cooperation among employees and riders, on-board security cameras, and continuation of a "zero tolerance" policy for on-board crimes adopted in 1996 made riding the bus in 1997 safer.

Metro Transit's policy of zero tolerance requires arrests for even minor on-board crimes—like fare evasion and drunkenness—that previously would have been cause only for ejection. In the first nine months of 1997, all reported incidents on transit buses and at transit stops were down 14 percent from the same period in 1996. Reports of felony and misdemeanor crimes were down 15 percent.

Transit police, bus drivers and transit supervisors worked closely in 1997 to reduce the crime rate. Metro Transit continues to equip new buses with security cameras, which help deter crime and record incidents that do occur. In addition, closed circuit television at transit hubs and card access for employees at transit facilities, stores and Council buildings add to security. Metro Transit received a \$25,000 grant from the Minnesota Department of Public Safety in 1997 to continue extra officer support to patrol bus routes with higher crime incidents on weekend evenings.

Mancel Mitchell, former chief of police for St. Louis Park, became the Metropolitan Council's Director of Public Safety in 1997 after the retirement of Richard Carlquist. Mitchell is continuing the Council's successful efforts to strengthen safety on transit buses, at bus stops and at all Council facilities.



## State Fair service is huge success

Metro Transit's partnership with the Minnesota State Fair yielded great results in 1997. Nearly 400,000 rides—up 50 percent from the previous year—were given to and from the fair by Metro Transit buses, with 12 percent of all fair visitors arriving on Metro Transit.

Services by Metro Transit and private providers helped reduce traffic and parking congestion, contributed to air quality and helped set attendance records at the fair. Regular route service was enhanced, buses carried passengers from parking lots at the University of Minnesota and regional shopping centers, and the University Transitway was used to get fair-goers to and from the university and downtown Minneapolis quickly. Fair service provides an excellent opportunity for infrequent or non-riders to see what transit can accomplish in the region.

## Metro Commuter Services— Creating partnerships to ease traffic congestion, connect people to jobs

Getting people out of the habit of driving alone and into car pools, buses and other transportation modes has been the mission of Metro Commuter Services (formerly Minnesota Rideshare) for 20

years. The program serves commuters and employers, and has several benefits for the region, including easing traffic congestion, reducing energy consumption, improving air quality, and helping economic growth by connecting employers and workers.

In 1997 Metro Commuter Services pursued several strategies to encourage transportation alternatives, including:

- Working on-site with employers to assess the transportation needs of employees and develop options for filling the needs
- Holding twice-yearly training sessions for employers on transportation alternatives and how to develop company-specific programs
- Maintaining and building a database of registered car poolers, matching riders with car pools, and helping to create new car pools. The number of registered car pools has climbed for several years to reach about 5,200 in 1997
- Planning and carrying out special events, like the annual region-wide B-BOP Day, Commuter Choice Awards and local commuter fairs, to create awareness and build participation in alternative travel modes

Metro Commuter Services reaches hundreds of employers and thousands of commuters each year through these efforts. In 1997, telephone inquiries to Metro Commuter Services averaged 1,450 each month.

### **Guaranteed Ride Home— Transit users and poolers have options in emergencies**

Participation in a new program that guarantees emergency rides for frequent bus riders and car poolers surpassed the first-year goal.

Research has repeatedly shown that a major reason people are reluctant to give

up driving alone is the lack of flexibility in case of emergencies. The Guaranteed Ride Home program, adopted by the Metropolitan Council and other regional transit providers in 1996, ensures that in the event of an emergency, any enrolled bus rider or car pooler can get a free ride home. Every six months, enrollees receive two coupons to be used in emergencies either for a free bus ride or up to \$20 reimbursement for cab fare.

After 12 months, a total of 8,854 people had registered in the program, exceeding the goal of 6,600. Almost one-fifth of the enrollees were new or lapsed users of transit and car pools. About 14 percent of the coupons issued were redeemed during the first year, at a cost of \$20,000. Participants are reimbursed by either Metro Transit, one of several separate providers in the metro area or Metro Commuter Services for poolers.

The Guaranteed Ride Home Program also replaced 11 separate programs that were employer-specific or tied to certain freeway corridors, streamlining services to commuters.

### **Metro Mobility service changes go smoothly**

In midsummer a number of service changes generally went smoothly for Metro Mobility and its customers. On June 28, the paratransit service went from three contract providers to two, Laidlaw Transit Services and Handicabs. While trip denials were up initially in July due to a temporary lack of drivers, by August they were down to 3 percent. A shorter reservation window instituted in 1996—four days ahead maximum—has cut down on canceled trips and trip denials. The trip denial rate averaged 5.8 percent in 1997.

Metro Mobility in 1997 also replaced its vehicle fleet, putting 135 new vans and



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*...more efficient  
vehicles will save an  
estimated \$100,000  
annually.*

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16 sedans, for ambulatory passengers, on the road. The new vans are smaller, have more maneuverability and are one foot



closer to the ground, making it easier for riders to board. Fuel savings from the more efficient vehicles will save an estimated \$100,000 annually.

Metro Mobility service introduced more convenience for riders in 1997. As of June 28, customers could call for a ride the same day they wanted it, and if space was available, they were accommodated. Through September, an average of 50 percent of all same-day ride requests were honored. Overall ridership averaged 83,429 in the first nine months of the year, about equal to the same period in 1996.

In 1998 Metro Mobility will reevaluate both the process it uses to certify customers and its application forms. The goal is to make a better functional assessment of potential riders to ensure that as many people as possible are using accessible regular route transit services. Recertification of all Metro Mobility riders will take place in January 1999.



# Regional Partnerships

## Council tests U-Pass transit at the University

In conjunction with taking over several University of Minnesota bus routes, the Metropolitan Council started a demonstration project in the Como Ave. neighborhood near the St. Paul campus. Metro Transit is making available up to 1,000 all-you-can-ride cards good for an entire quarter, at a cost of \$20 each, to students and staff living in a specifically defined corridor along Como Ave. The passes are subsidized by the Council and \$25,000 from the University. The University benefits from decreased traffic and parking congestion, and Metro Transit increases efficiency with more riders. The goal is to go campus-wide with the program in 1998. Similar programs are extremely popular in Denver and Seattle.

Metro Transit is also exploring the possibility of instituting a discounted bus pass program to employers in the region. An employer could purchase deeply discounted bus passes for all their employees and offer them as a benefit. Decreases in farebox revenues would be offset by increased ridership, if the experience of the Denver area is any indication. Regional objectives of reducing congestion, increasing the life of the current highway system, and connecting workers to jobs—all of which help the regional economy—would be met.

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*...exploring the  
possibility of instituting  
a discounted bus pass  
program to employers...*

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## Urging downtown solo drivers to change their habits

St. Paul is on a mission to open its downtown to more commuters, and the Metropolitan Council is playing a key role in the effort.

St. Paul Mayor Norm Coleman in 1997 initiated the Commuter Action Team. The partnership includes staff from the Mayor's Office, St. Paul's Planning and Economic Development and Public Works Departments, and the Council's transportation planning, Metro Commuter Services and Metro Transit areas. The team is charged with implementing a plan to deal with the city's parking shortage in the wake of major job growth in recent years.





Metro Commuter Services developed and conducted a survey of the 10 largest employers in the downtown area to learn more about travel needs. The team is using the data to develop effective strategies, including increased bus service. Metro Transit has partnered with Allright Parking, which owns a large parking lot near the Lafayette Bridge in Lowertown. Allright upgraded a shelter for bus commuters and Metro Transit greatly expanded bus service to and from the lot. All Route 21 buses now begin and end at the lot and serve the heart of downtown, in effect creating a shuttle for commuters parking there. To increase use of the lot as a park-and-ride facility, Metro Transit offers the lot's contract customers bus passes at a 65 percent discount.

In 1998 Council staff will also assist the Transit Steering Committee formed in late 1997 in downtown Minneapolis. The committee will review the potential transit needs in the downtown area and recommend solutions for both the short and long term. Potential strategies could include a Nicollet Mall shuttle, downtown circulator, Hiawatha Transitway connections, a free fare zone, and others. Committee representation includes local officials, downtown business and resident representatives, and transit providers.

## Transit curriculum targets people with disabilities

The Metropolitan Council and a consortium of transit and transportation organizations is developing a curriculum to teach students and adults with disabilities to learn to use the bus system. Aimed primarily at people with developmental or physical impairment, the curriculum will teach skills such as understanding bus signs, communicating with the driver, carrying proper identification, signaling a stop and using a wheelchair lift.



The interagency Metropolitan Transit Education Committee (MTEC) selected a consultant in October to develop the curriculum. Funding for the project comes from MTEC members, including the Council, the Minnesota Department of Transportation and a federal transportation grant.

The project will rely on "transit mentors" to teach the materials, including special education teachers, paraprofessionals, social service providers, parents and others. A transit mentor guidebook and learner materials, including a slide show and audiotapes, will comprise the curriculum. Training sessions will be conducted for transit mentors and parents of children with disabilities. MTEC is working with Metro Mobility to coordinate the special-needs curriculum with Metro Mobility educational activities.

The new curriculum builds on MTEC's standard 5th through 8th grade transit curriculum, which has been distributed to more than 300 teachers since it was first made available. The Council also partners with the St. Paul Pioneer Press Pioneers in Education program to distribute the materials in St. Paul area schools.

## Helping new workers get to their jobs

An estimated 8,500 Twin Cities area welfare recipients looked for work in 1997 under new federal welfare reform legislation. While about 40 percent of job openings are in Minneapolis and St. Paul, the rest are in the suburbs, many not served by transit.

The Metropolitan Council in 1997 worked in partnership with county and state agencies, job placement organizations and employers to design transportation options for people leaving welfare. The effort will help respond to labor shortages and move people from welfare to work.

State funds for the initiative were approved by the 1997 legislature. The Council will allocate a total of \$1 million to the seven counties in each year of the two-year program based on each county's share of the region's welfare caseload.

Counties are considering pilot programs that maximize existing transit and create flexible new transportation options, including: increasing subsidies for monthly bus passes; providing shuttles from transit hubs, like Southdale, to work sites; providing shuttles between low-income housing developments and employment concentrations; giving money to workers, contingent on job retention, for car maintenance; reimbursing workers for use of existing local transit options; training welfare recipients as van drivers to employment sites; and others. Leased or donated vehicles may be used for the pilot projects, including some retired Metro Mobility vans.

County proposals were due in late 1997, after which the Council would negotiate contracts with the counties for allocation of the state funds. The first projects are expected to be implemented in early 1998.

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## *Five cities.....*

*working together with  
the Mdewakanton Sioux  
community...*

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## Council brings southwest communities together

Accommodating projected growth and ensuring groundwater availability while protecting sensitive environmental features is the focus of a partnership of communities the Metropolitan Council brought together in 1997. Five cities in the Minnesota River Valley—Burnsville, Lakeville, Prior Lake, Savage and Shakopee—are working together with the Mdewakanton Sioux community and government agencies to overcome long-term water supply issues that transcend their boundaries.

The communities, which rely entirely on groundwater, are expected to add 91,000 residents in the next 25 years. But current water use is already drawing down groundwater supplies that are crucial to three special environmental features in the area: a rare, calcium-rich fen, a trout stream, and a natural springs that have spiritual significance to the Mdewakanton Sioux.

The communities worked with the Council, the Minnesota Departments of Natural Resources, Health and Pollution Control, and the U.S. Geologic Survey to develop a strategy to ensure water supply and protect the environment. The plan, which will likely include conservation practices, groundwater monitoring, and well drilling outside the most sensitive areas, is expected to be finalized early in 1998.



## Agencies expand water monitoring

In 1997 the Metropolitan Council strengthened its partnerships with local, regional and state agencies to increase monitoring the health of the region's water resources.

The partnership agencies presented a coordinated funding proposal for water quality monitoring to the 1997 Legislature. An appropriation of \$3.5 million to the Interagency Water Monitoring Initiative for the 1998-99 biennium will allow for expanded monitoring efforts state-wide, including the seven-county metropolitan area.

Of the 46 metro area watersheds that drain to the Mississippi, Minnesota and St. Croix Rivers, only 20 are currently monitored. The initiative will allow Metropolitan Council Environmental Services (MCES) to monitor 10 more. MCES will also establish monitoring sites in the Minnesota River watershed to identify sources of mercury and PCBs, which cause fish consumption advisories.

The Council's long-standing commitment to measuring water quality includes monitoring of three major rivers, a number of tributary streams, area lakes, and discharges from nine MCES wastewater treatment plants. Ongoing monitoring has tracked water quality improvements associated with wastewater treatment plant upgrades at the Metro Plant in St. Paul. In recent years gamefish and other aquatic life—as well as increased riverfront development and recreation—have returned to the Mississippi River because of greatly improved water quality.

Water quality monitoring also helps to identify problems in metro area watersheds, such as those caused by surface water runoff from urban and agricultural sources. With good data, resources can be targeted to achieve



the most cost-effective solutions. Trained volunteers and local partners collect and prepare water samples from lakes and streams for analysis by the Council. Costs are shared with local governments.

The Council's watershed-focused management strategy balances solutions for point-source and nonpoint-source pollution in a cost-effective manner to achieve water quality goals. Water quality information is shared with local decision-makers, who have limited community funds for protection and improvement of watersheds.

Partners in the Interagency Water Monitoring Initiative include the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency; Minnesota Departments of Natural Resources, Health and Agriculture; Board of Water and Soil Resources; and the Metropolitan Council. Federal participants include the Army Corps of Engineers; Environmental Protection Agency; and the U.S. Geological Survey. Local partners include watershed management organizations and districts, and counties and cities. The partners have two working groups, one focusing on surface water monitoring and the other on groundwater monitoring, which meet separately every other month. They set priorities, exchange information and identify opportunities to integrate monitoring programs and data. The two groups meet together twice a year.



## Council is leader in environmental education

An interactive exhibit that teaches people about watersheds and the impact people have on them reached hundreds of thousands of Minnesotans in 1997 at community festivals and events, including the State Fair.

The exhibit—called “The WaterShed”—is a project of a regional coalition called WaterShed Partners. Metropolitan Council Environmental Services (MCES) is working with over 30 other organizations whose mission is to promote a public awareness that inspires people to act to protect water quality in their watersheds.

WaterShed Partners includes community-based environmental groups, academic and educational institutions, watershed management organizations and districts, and state and local governments. The coalition is leveraging resources, building on existing efforts and getting consistent messages out to the public in a variety of ways. MCES strengthened the partnership and funded the exhibit through a \$100,000 grant from its Twin Cities Water Quality Initiative (TCQI).



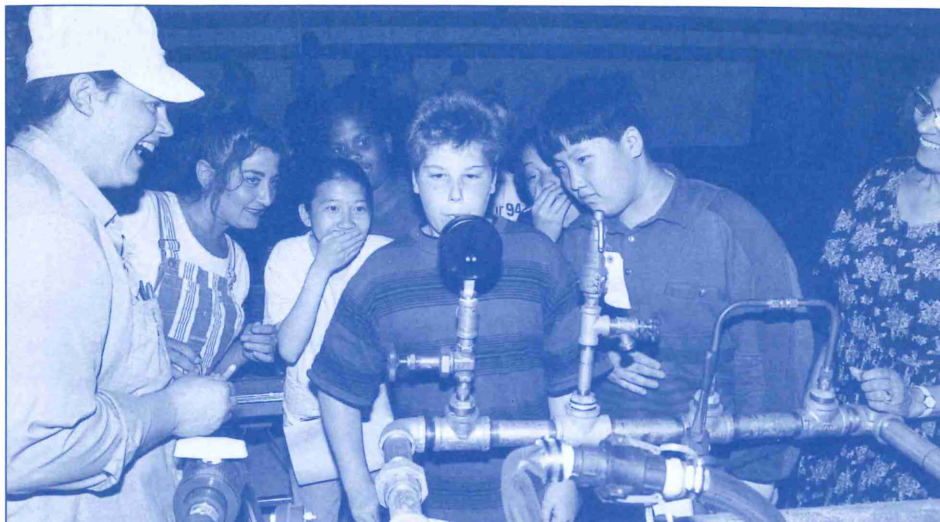
The exhibit, designed jointly by WaterShed Partners and the Science Museum of Minnesota, and constructed by the museum, is a unique tool for teaching people about watersheds and nonpoint source pollution. The coalition believes that public awareness and watershed management are the keys to reducing water pollution.

Employees of MCES in 1997 carried on their tradition of making the entire region their classroom. In venues from schools to the Mall of America, employees taught a variety of environmental lessons to thousands of Twin Citians—adults and children—covering wastewater treatment, water quality monitoring and reducing pollution in surface water runoff.

The Mall of America’s UnderWater World aquarium attraction was the site of courses MCES taught in conjunction with the Tarlton Institute for Marine Education, the nonprofit arm of the aquarium. Courses included “Meet Your Local Scientist,” which exposes students to the variety of jobs available in the field of water resources; ‘MCES’ popular “River Rangers” program, which teaches elementary students about both point and nonpoint source pollution; and a teacher training session called “The Ecology and Biology of Lakes.” In the first six months of the program about 400 students and teachers took classes at the site.

MCES, Carver County Soil and Water Conservation District and the Chaska Public Schools completed the third year of their joint summer school pilot project on stream bank erosion control. The project, funded through a TCQI grant, provides student participants an opportunity to earn credit in general science through significant hands-on field learning. A table-top stream bank erosion model, which demonstrates how stream bank erosion occurs, was built as part of the project. The table was used at the Minnesota Zoo Earth Day celebration, community festivals and a county fair.





In a partnership with professional organizations of scientists and engineers, MCES offered local workshops to train teachers in hands-on curriculum on nonpoint source pollution, and offered similar courses in conjunction with the Minnesota Zoo and Mankato State University. These courses will continue in 1998. Mini-courses were also presented at the Minnesota Wastewater Treatment Plant Operators Annual Conference to provide operators state-wide with hands-on ideas on how to reach out to schools and neighboring communities to educate people on water resource issues.

The arena of 'MCES' environmental education widened globally in 1997 as staff designed and coordinated teacher training workshops using the hands-on curriculum on nonpoint source pollution at the Water Environment Federation's international conference in Chicago. Plans are underway to add the opportunity of graduate credit to teachers who take part in the workshop at the 1998 conference. In addition, MCES staff in 1997 put on a workshop on industrial wastewater pre-treatment for a visiting Russian delegation.

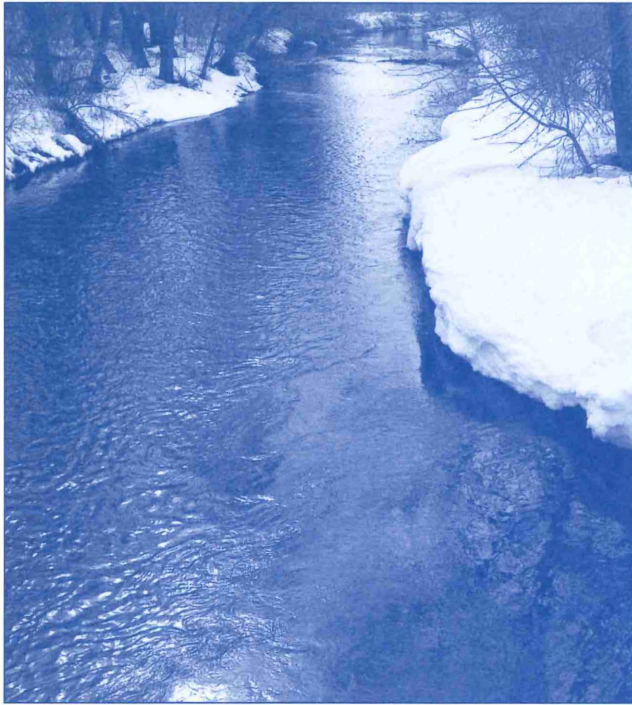
MCES continued its long-standing partnership with Dayton's Bluff Elementary School in St. Paul. A career fair featured a dozen employees—from engineers to wastewater interceptor inspectors to

secretaries—to help young people understand what kinds of jobs are available and what skills they need to qualify for these and similar positions. MCES also gave classroom presentations on point and nonpoint source pollution control and took part in the school's annual reading day.

The Dayton's Bluff partnership was one of three education projects for which MCES received a 1997 Governor's Award. The second was MCES' collaboration with the City of Anoka on the development of Two Rivers Peninsula Point Historical Park, the site of the former Anoka Wastewater Treatment Plant. Exhibits developed by the partners commemorate the rich history of the site, including its significance to Native Americans and the state's early lumbering industry. The importance of sound wastewater management for water quality was also emphasized. The third award went to the two-day "Waterways" environmental education celebration, which MCES planned and held in 1996 in collaboration with the Walker Art Center and Hennepin Parks.

MCES received the 1997 Public Information and Education Award for Comprehensive Public Education Programs from the Association of Metropolitan Sewerage Agencies.





## Council grants help restore water quality

In 1997 the Metropolitan Council awarded grants totaling nearly \$4 million to local governments and nonprofit groups to help restore water quality in lakes, streams and rivers throughout the region.

The Council's Twin Cities Water Quality Initiative (TCQI) funds innovative and effective programs that tackle nonpoint source pollution from surface water runoff. Council resources are leveraged for maximum benefit to the region's overall water quality; the programs foster good working relationships between the Council, local units of government and other partners; and the programs promote information sharing and reduce duplication of efforts, making efficient use of public resources.

The 1997 TCQI-funded projects focus on education, technical improvements, planning and research. Examples include:

- \$200,000 for a collaboration of the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources and WaterShed Partners on an awareness and community action

campaign. The campaign, which will begin in 1998, aims to influence public attitudes and behavior in household and lawn care practices, as well as in purchasing environmentally friendly products, to reduce water pollution.

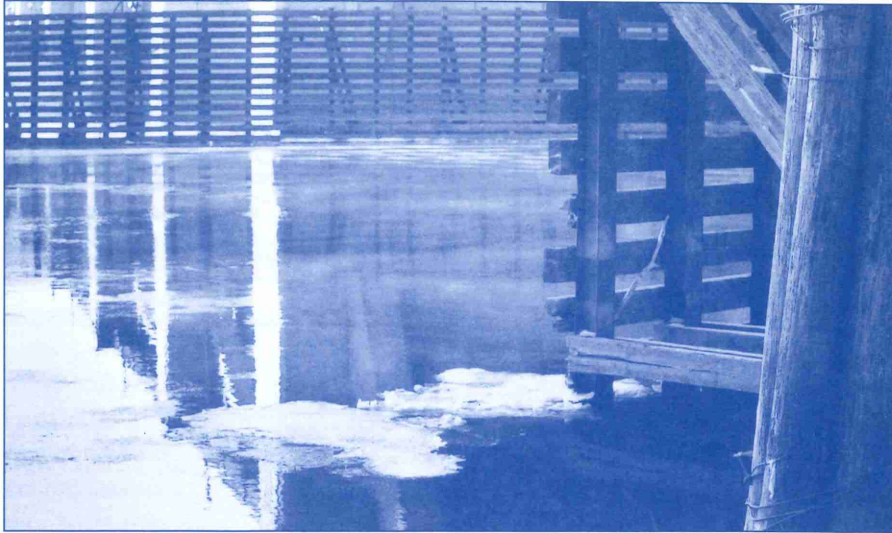
- \$1.2 million in block grants to Scott and Carver Counties to implement watershed practices that improve water quality.
- \$100,000 to the City of Chaska to complete construction of a wetland treatment system to treat surface water runoff from the town prior to discharge into East Chaska Creek.
- \$100,000 administered through the Minnesota Extension Service to develop a watershed plan along the Minnesota River from St. Peter to Fort Snelling.

Two Council employees who manage and administer the TCQI program were recognized for their support of Scott County's conservation efforts. The Scott County Soil and Water Conservation Board of Supervisors bestowed its 1997 Conservation Cooperator award to the employees. All previous awards had been given to local farmers.

The Minnesota Association of County Agricultural Agents presented MCES with its "Friend of Agriculture" award in 1997. MCES was singled out for its commitment to helping farmers and land managers achieve water quality goals within the Minnesota River watershed.

The five-year TCQI was established as part of the 1993 permit agreement for the Metro Wastewater Treatment Plant negotiated between the former Metropolitan Waste Control Commission, the Metropolitan Council and the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. A total of \$8 million was made available for grants during the period; more than 90 percent of the funds will have been committed by the end of 1997.





## Council spearheads river initiative

The Metropolitan Council in 1997 worked closely with the McKnight Foundation to nominate the metro stretch of the Mississippi River for designation as an American Heritage River.

President Bill Clinton announced the American Heritage Rivers Initiative in the 1997 State of the Union address. The goal of the initiative is to support river communities' efforts toward economic prosperity, a healthy environment, and historic and cultural preservation. Communities surrounding the designated rivers will receive federal support and services, including:

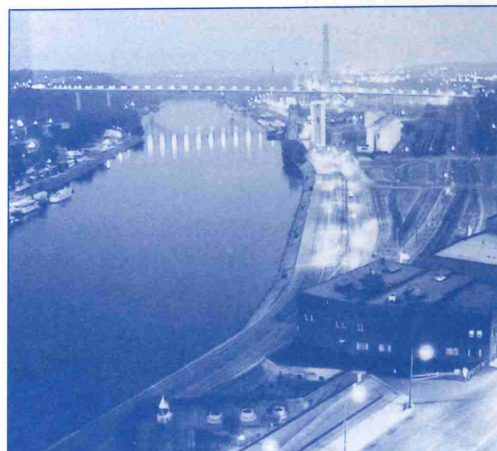
- Special recognition for integrating economic and environmental sustainability and historic preservation
- A special liaison to federal agencies that will help match community needs with existing resources, such as grants, loans and technical assistance from field staff
- A coordinated effort with the public sector to attract foundation and corporate involvement

Some of the designated river communities also will have the option to be a test for revamping federal programs to make them more efficient. The initiative will not

create new regulatory requirements for individuals or state and local governments.

A Council steering committee, with representatives from local communities and interested groups, helped prepare the nomination. The committee hosted several informational meetings and surveyed about 400 communities and interest groups to gather information. Communities found the effort extremely valuable as a way to exchange information about activities along the river and improve coordination of plans and projects. Information about the initiative was also made available on the Council's web site.

Designation of 10 rivers (or parts of rivers) around the U.S. as American Heritage Rivers will be made in early 1998.



## Park projects on the horizon

The Metropolitan Council, with advice from its Parks and Open Space Commission, plans acquisition and development for the regional park system and finances capital improvements for regional parks and open space. A combination of Council bond funds and state dollars are used. Additional state funding is transferred to 10 local governments to operate and maintain the regional park system. Established in 1974, the system now includes 31 regional parks, 11 larger park reserves, 12 trail corridors and four special recreation features that all add up to more than 49,600 acres.

In 1997 the Council received \$3.5 million from the state Environmental Trust Fund for acquisition and development of regional parks. Along with \$2.3 million in Council bonds, the funds were allocated to several projects, including:

*Lilydale/Harriet Island Regional Park—* Construction of roads, parking, lighting and landscaping.

*Bunker Hills Regional Park—* Development plans include 20 full-service campsites, roads, parking, a dump station, a shower/restroom/laundry facility, upgrading of the existing camping facility and construction of two visitor contact stations.

*Land acquisition in Dakota County—* Additional parcels will be acquired for Lake Byllesby Regional Park, Spring Lake Regional Park, Lebanon Hills Regional Park and Miesville Ravine.

*North Hennepin Regional Trail—* The trail segment from French Regional Park to Wirth Regional Park will be developed.

*Hyland-Bush-Anderson Lakes Park Reserve—* An outdoor concert pavilion for musical and theater performances, seating 3,500 people, along with a trailhead center, will be developed at Normandale Lake in the park reserve in Bloomington.

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*...the region-wide system, ...will improve two-way radio communications...*

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## Purchase of equipment for region-wide radio system recommended

In November the Metropolitan Radio Board ratified that contract negotiations begin with Motorola to provide two-way radio communications equipment for operation of a new region-wide public safety radio system. The system is needed to replace outmoded, incompatible and overburdened systems operated separately by local governments around the region.

Motorola, in partnership with Minnesota-based E.F. Johnson, proposed a nearly \$25 million contract with the Minnesota Department of Transportation (Mn/DOT). The contract would pay for transmitters, microwave facilities and computers that will make up the region-wide "backbone" of the system and provide day-to-day communications for Mn/DOT, the State Highway Patrol and Metro Transit. Mn/DOT will actually own and operate the region-wide system, which will improve two-way radio communications among highway troopers, drug enforcement officers, local police, paramedics, firefighters and public works employees.

Separate contracts totaling an additional \$20 million would provide subsystems for Hennepin County and Minneapolis, which will also operate on the system backbone. The city and county will be responsible for the costs of their respective subsystems.

In order to link Metro Transit buses to the system, the Metropolitan Council



will ask the 1998 Legislature for \$4.5 million in state bonding to complement regional and federal funds totaling \$16 million. The funds are to build a new radio communications center at the Heywood Garage in downtown Minneapolis. The Council is also studying whether to equip Metro Mobility buses with the technology.

The 17-member radio board was created by the 1995 Legislature after two years of study by a Metropolitan Council-appointed committee. The board is composed of local, regional and state agency officials who designed and will govern the radio system.

The initial users of the system will be Mn/DOT, State Patrol, emergency medical providers, Metro Transit, Minneapolis and Hennepin County. Other local units of government in the region can participate as their needs dictate and as they upgrade their own communications systems. Benefits to participating local governments include:

- Faster, easier communication with other jurisdictions
- Cost sharing with other users of the regional system
- More capacity to accommodate future growth in public safety communications, expected to increase more than 50 percent in the next few years
- Ability to retain dispatching responsibilities at the local level

The system is expected to begin operations sometime in late 1999 or early 2000.

## Geographic information— Forging a single regional geographical data world

A 12-member geographic data policy board was formed in 1997 to oversee development

of a stakeholder-governed geographic information system (GIS) to serve the seven-county Twin Cities area.

GIS products offer a unique perspective on the region and enhance planning efforts. The innovative technology generates visual geographic and analytical tools, including maps, on computer. The Metropolitan Council in 1995 initiated MetroGIS, a multi-organization collaborative, to facilitate sharing of geographic data among public and private entities in the region. The collaborative vastly expands access to geographic data, reduces duplication of effort, and maximizes public resources.

The 12-member policy board has representatives from counties, cities, watershed organizations and public education. The board is supported by a Coordinating Committee comprised of administrators and managers from a variety of organizations. Several topical advisory teams report to the committee. The board makes decisions on issues such as the kinds of information to be included in the system, public access to the data, and how the system should be financed.

Three strategic initiatives were underway in 1997 to help move MetroGIS from concept to reality: agreeing on data specifications for the highest priority information needs of users, and designating a “caretaker” for these datasets; securing interim data and cost-sharing agreements to access commonly needed data; and implementing a mechanism to search for and obtain data from others via the internet.

The policy board endorsed 13 high priority information needs, the top of which are city, township and other jurisdictional boundaries; land use plans; street locations; and land parcels. Data and cost-sharing agreements were negotiated and secured with six of the seven metro area counties in 1997. The final agreement was expected to be complete by early 1998. Design of a

MetroGIS Web Index was underway, with a fully functional index expected to be operational in spring 1998.

Once operational, MetroGIS will be an independent public entity governed by its members. Data will be easily accessible to local governments and other organizations in the seven-county area.

## Studies on commuter rail, school transportation underway

Metropolitan Council staff are serving on committees for two commuter rail studies that got underway in 1997.

The first is a study by Hennepin County of the potential for using an existing rail corridor from downtown Minneapolis going northwest to Rogers, Minnesota, for commuter rail service. By January 1998 an assessment of potential ridership and the capital investment needed to provide the service will be complete. If the corridor is found to have potential, then a more detailed analysis of capital needs and operating expenses would be made by the end of 1998.

The 1997 Legislature mandated that the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) conduct a study to determine the feasibility of using

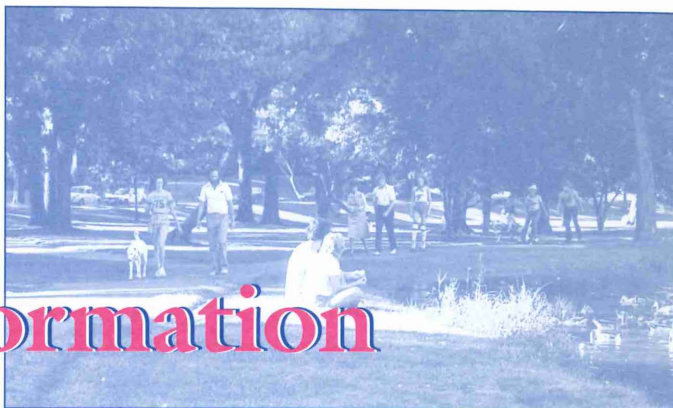
freight rail corridors for potential commuter rail service in the seven-county metro area. The first phase, to be completed in January 1988, will evaluate potential ridership and perform a preliminary assessment of existing rail corridors in the region. If corridors are found to be feasible, a second phase study would evaluate the corridor or corridors selected by September 1998.

A study of the potential for using Metro Transit to transport students to high schools in Minneapolis and St. Paul was underway in 1997. The 1997 Legislature asked the Council, working with school districts, to develop a feasibility plan that would provide transit service for 75 percent of 9th through 12th graders in the central cities. The capacity of the Metro Transit bus system to carry more than 10,000 students is being evaluated, along with school start times, safety, service quality, fares and other issues. The plan is due at the Legislature by Jan. 30, 1998.





# Regional Information



## Bus schedules now on Council's web site

In 1997 the Metropolitan Council greatly expanded its web page to give transit users 24-hour access to bus route and schedule information. Internet users have access to maps that identify which route will get them where they want to go. The web site also offers information on fares, where to buy discounted passes, the Guaranteed Ride Home program and the location of park and ride lots.

The Council in 1997 added its revised Regional Blueprint, including the Metro 2040 Growth Strategy, to the web site, along with the Water Resources Management Plan and a guidebook to help communities update their comprehensive plans. The site offers other important regional information, including:

- Current and forecasted population, household and employment for cities, townships and counties in the seven-county area
- Council publications, reports and geographic information system maps
- Information on the Council's diverse water quality activities, including wastewater facilities and services, performance, and its industrial and nonpoint source pollution prevention programs
- A searchable directory of regional parks and recreational activities
- Key staff contacts and direct links for further information

An estimated 46 percent of metro area residents have access to the internet through their home or workplace. The Council's web site receives an average of 8,000 inquiries per day.

The web site can be accessed at <http://www.metrocouncil.org>. People who want direct access to bus schedules can use [www.metrotransit.org](http://www.metrotransit.org).

## Instant updates through Metro Information Line at 602-1888

The Council's Metro Information Line offers the public prerecorded information and news available 24 hours. The line includes information on new Council publications, recent Council actions, Council job openings, upcoming Council meetings, and subsidized housing.

## Data Center provides information, takes public comments

The Metropolitan Council's Regional Data Center offers regional information and publications to the public via walk-in, phone (602-1140), mail and electronic internet access. The Center offers more than 200 reports, publications, maps and facts, as well as custom research services. More than 9,000 public inquiries were

made to the center in 1997 and 19,000 publications, reports and brochures distributed; more than 2,500 data requests were fulfilled.

The public conveyed opinions and comments on regional issues via mail, fax and e-mail to the Regional Data Center at: [data.center@metc.state.mn.us](mailto:data.center@metc.state.mn.us). Public comments were also received via a Public Comment Line at 602-1500. The line offers 24-hours access for people who want to call with opinions on regional issues, comments for public hearings or requests for additional information.

### A regional news and information media partnership

A special partnership with neighborhood and community newspapers to provide news and information about Council programs and services continued in 1997. A series of articles, brochures and flyers inserted into 30 local newspapers described regional issues, programs and services, and opportunities for public involvement. The series reached more than 250,000 households.





# 1997 Budget Overview

## Background

The Twin Cities region is recognized nationwide as a regionally minded and well-planned urban center as well as for its beautiful natural environment. Leading the effort in regional planning and competitive operations of regional services is the Metropolitan Council.

The Council is proud of its regional role in working with others to keep the economy healthy. The result is economic growth and continuing low unemployment.

The Council is proud of its employees and partnerships with 186 local communities, other regional agencies, and state and federal government to serve the public more effectively. By working together with business and the community, the Metropolitan Council continues its commitment to bring about innovation, improved performance and cost efficiency in regional planning and services.

## Regional Services

The Metropolitan Council serves the public in six principal areas:

- 1) *Planning for the future*  
guiding development and managing growth with communities
- 2) *Bringing about a coordinated regional transit system and better travel demand management*  
working closely with transit providers, other travel organizations

and employers; serving as the largest provider of transit service; regional transit system providing nearly 206,000 bus rides on an average weekday, with about 754 buses on the streets during peak hours; providing slightly more than one million rides for people with disabilities through Metro Mobility

- 3) *Managing water resources to ensure water quality and adequate supply and treating 300 million gallons of wastewater daily*  
keeping rivers and lakes clean and families healthy; working with others to reduce and prevent pollution of our waterways
- 4) *Providing affordable housing*  
serving 134 communities and 4,943 households through Section 8 housing and family help programs
- 5) *Keeping the cost of financing regional projects as low as possible*  
maintaining a triple-A credit rating; reflecting sound fiscal management and prudent financial investments
- 6) *Acquiring and developing regional parks and open space*  
working with local government partners to develop and maintain regional parks and open space for the public to enjoy (more than 16 million visits in 1996); sharing of resources and expertise with state government in planning for public recreation needs and natural resources management

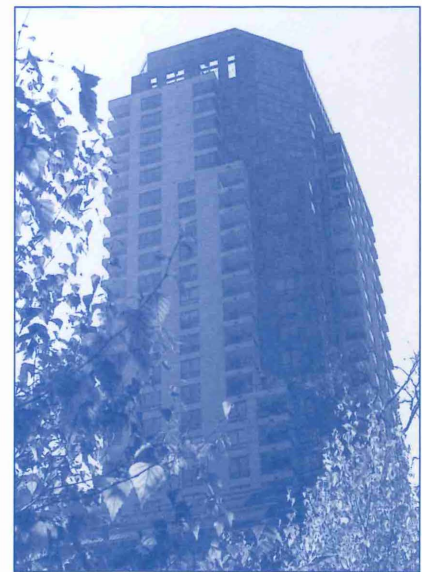
# Metropolitan Council 1997 Operating Budget as Amended

	Operating Budget Regional Administration & Community Development			Total
	General Fund	HRA	Capital Outlay Special Revenue Fund	
<b>Revenues</b>				
Property Tax-Gross Levy	9,167,500	—	—	9,167,500
Federal Revenues	79,500	2,843,658	—	2,923,158
State Appropriations	3,303,000	205,700	—	3,508,700
Local	46,000	315,529	—	361,529
Sewer Service Charges	—	—	—	—
Industrial Strength Charges	—	—	—	—
Fares	—	—	—	—
Contract Revenues	—	—	—	—
Interest	180,000	50,000	—	230,000
Other	10,500	13	365,000	375,513
<b>Total Revenue Sources</b>	<b>12,786,500</b>	<b>3,414,900</b>	<b>365,000</b>	<b>16,566,400</b>
<b>Expenditures</b>				
Salaries & Benefit	14,104,064	1,234,984	—	15,339,048
Contracted Service	8,072,501	72,400	—	8,144,901
Materials & Supplies	—	—	—	—
Chemicals	—	—	—	—
Rent	1,726,100	137,800	—	1,863,900
Utilities	—	—	—	—
Transit Assistance	—	—	—	—
Insurance	930,000	—	—	930,000
Capital Expenditures	19,000	—	1,530,500	1,549,500
Other	6,529,595	1,300,361	—	7,829,956
Subtotal	31,381,260	2,745,545	1,530,500	35,657,305
Organizational Expense Allocation	(17,788,462)	600,000	—	(17,188,462)
Net Expense After Allocation	13,592,798	3,345,545	1,530,500	18,468,843
Other Funding Sources & Uses	357,798	—	1,165,500	1,523,298
<b>Balance</b>	<b>(448,500)</b>	<b>69,355</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>(379,145)</b>



Environmental Services Division	Transportation Division	Council Total	1998
—	63,944,795	73,112,295	77,901,342
—	8,336,966	11,260,124	9,055,400
—	45,053,306	48,562,006	52,334,300
—	—	361,529	176,000
92,997,000	—	92,997,000	92,518,000
10,050,000	—	10,050,000	9,050,000
—	49,927,340	49,927,340	53,111,518
—	4,195,000	4,195,000	4,965,000
610,000	880,100	1,720,100	1,852,721
917,000	2,132,520	3,425,033	3,516,730
104,574,000	174,470,027	295,610,427	304,481,011
59,121,000	110,667,416	185,127,464	194,365,629
6,921,400	4,141,966	19,208,267	19,146,601
4,571,000	13,991,600	18,562,600	19,842,759
4,718,017	—	4,718,017	4,280,506
—	182,866	2,046,766	1,825,510
14,133,000	2,580,000	16,713,000	15,002,251
—	27,178,267	27,178,267	33,547,409
1,575,000	2,610,000	5,115,000	4,323,848
3,349,000	144,975	5,043,475	3,314,346
6,269,000	4,343,741	18,442,697	11,536,036
100,657,417	165,840,831	302,155,553	307,184,895
8,610,171	8,578,291	—	—
109,267,588	174,419,122	302,155,553	307,184,895
4,693,588	440,000	6,656,886	4,741,087
—	490,905	111,760	2,037,203

*Leading  
the effort in  
regional planning  
and competitive  
operations*







## 1997 Metropolitan Council members and their districts:

**Curt Johnson**— Chair; **Roger Scherer**—1— northwestern Hennepin County; **Bill Schreiber**—2— Robbinsdale, Crystal, New Hope, Brooklyn Center, Brooklyn Park; **Mary Hill Smith**—3— Edina, Hopkins, eastern Lake Minnetonka communities; **Julius C. Smith**—4— Lakeville, Eden Prairie, Carver County, most of Scott County; **Neil Peterson**—5— Shakopee, Savage, Bloomington, Richfield; **Martha M. Head**—6— Golden Valley, St. Louis Park, southwestern Minneapolis; **Barbara Butts Williams**—7— downtown and north Minneapolis, portion of south Minneapolis; **Carol A. Kummer**—8— eastern half of Minneapolis; **Jim Wychor**—9— Anoka County except Coon Rapids\*; **Richard Packer**—10— Coon Rapids, Fridley, Hilltop, Columbia Heights, St. Anthony, New Brighton, Mounds View; **Esther Newcome**—11— several communities in northern Ramsey County; **Charles Arnason**—12— almost all of Washington County, portions of North St. Paul, Maplewood; **Diane Z. Wolfson**—13— southern half of St. Paul; **Stephen B. Wellington, Jr.**—14— northern half of St. Paul, Lauderdale, Falcon Heights; **Kevin Howe**—15— Mendota, Mendota Heights, Eagan, Lilydale, Burnsville, Apple Valley; **Terrence Flower**—16— south Washington County, large portion of Dakota County.



Curtis (Curt)  
Johnson



Roger Scherer



Bill Schreiber



Mary H. Smith



Julius C.  
(Jules) Smith



Neil Peterson



Martha M.  
Head



Barbara Butts  
Williams



Carol A.  
Kummer



James (Jim)  
Wychor



Richard (Rick)  
Packer



Esther Newcome



Charles (Chuck)  
Arnason



Diane Z. (DeDe)  
Wolfson



Stephen B.  
Wellington, Jr.



Kevin Howe



Terrence (Terry)  
Flower

\* David Hartley served District 9 Jan.-May; Jim Wychor appointed Aug. 5





**The mission of the Metropolitan Council is to provide leadership in the effective planning of regional growth and redevelopment and in the delivery of quality regional services.**

The Metropolitan Council coordinates regional planning and guides development in the seven-county area. The Council operates regional services including wastewater collection and treatment, transit and Metro HRA—an affordable housing service that provides assistance to low-income families in the region. Created by the Legislature in 1967, the Council establishes policies and provides planning and technical assistance to communities in the Twin Cities region for airports, regional parks, highways and transit, sewers, air and water quality, land use and affordable housing.

## **Metropolitan Council**

Mears Park Centre  
230 East Fifth Street  
St. Paul, Minnesota 55101-1626

**Curtis Johnson**, chair  
**James Solem**, regional administrator  
**Richard Johnson**, associate regional administrator

### **General offices:**

(612) 602-1000; *by fax* (612) 602-1550  
Regional Administration and Planning,  
general offices  
(612) 602-1359  
Chair/Regional Administrator's Office  
(612) 602-1554  
Environmental Services, general offices  
(612) 602-1005  
Metro Transit, general offices  
(612) 349-7400

### **Customer Information:**

Metro Mobility Service Center  
(612) 602-1111  
Transit Information Centers  
(612) 373-3333  
Housing and Redevelopment Authority  
(612) 602-1428  
Regional Data Center  
(612) 602-1140  
*by email:* data.center@metc.state.mn.us  
Metro Commuter Services  
(612) 349-RIDE  
Metro Information Line:  
(612) 602-1888  
Public Comment Line:  
(612) 602-1500  
Web site:  
<http://www.metrocouncil.org>  
For direct link to transit information:  
[www.metrotransit.org](http://www.metrotransit.org)

Thanks to the many community organizations and Metropolitan Council staff who contributed information and time for this report.

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