Value captured in tax-increment districts rises again

The amount of Minnesota's tax base set aside through a widely used, but often controversial, development financing tool called tax-increment financing (TIF) is on the rise again, growing by just under one percent in tax year 1995. The growth in TIF value in 1995, the most recent figures available, resulted in the six percent decline in TIF value seen in 1994. That decline had been a change from the trend of increasing TIF value in the previous 11 years.

TIF allows communities to "capture" the increased property-tax revenues—the "tax increment"—generated by a development to finance some of the costs of that development. The increased tax revenues are not available for general city expenses or to other taxing districts, like the county or school district. Rather, they are reserved for TIF expenses for the life of the TIF district, which can range up to 25 years, depending on the type of district involved.

The tax base captured in TIF districts in 1995 amounted to $203,291,153, or 6.19 percent of the state's total property tax base of $3.3 billion. As the chart on page 6 shows, this is the lowest percentage of value captured by TIF in the last five years.

(The tax base figures discussed in this article are tax capacity values, which are the values used to compute property taxes. Because Minnesota taxes different types of property at different rates, tax capacity is expressed as a proportion of market value, depending on a property's use. If an assessor determined that a commercial property, for example, had a market value of $200,000, its tax capacity value for taxes payable in 1995 would have been $7,600-three percent of the first $100,000 of market value and 4.6 percent of the remaining $100,000. So tax base, or tax capacity, values are only a portion of the actual market value."

Continued on page 6

Telecomm consumers get second chance at state

by Milda K. Hedblom

Second of two articles. Most of the sweeping changes set out in the federal Telecommunications Bill of 1996 are of immediate importance to the companies that sell telecommunications and information services. The lobbying war that preceded its passage saw millions upon millions of dollars spent by the giants of the industry—especially the long-distance companies on one side and the local telephone companies on the other—on provisions to protect themselves.

User groups such as the Consumer Federation of America, education groups and library associations went home relatively unhappy. Nevertheless, some provisions are being hailed as victories for parents, such as the V-chip to be required in new television sets and the establishment of a rating scheme for video programs. Still other provisions are extremely controversial due to their potential constitutional impact, such as the criminal penalties for knowingly allowing electronic posting of indecent material over a facility under one's control. The bill itself recognizes the time bomb and provides for direct appeals to the Supreme Court.

Avionics could affect airport capacity, landing patterns

by Ted Kolderie

In the early '80s a Minnesotan riding in from de Gaulle airport to Paris got into a conversation about airports with an executive of KLM (Royal Dutch Airlines) on his way to meeting about aviation electronics in Toulouse.

Airports aren't going to be located on the edge of cities, the KLM executive said. They're going to be in the center of cities, as railway stations were. Like Tempelhof in Berlin.

And like Wold-Chamberlain here—given the spread of development around it to the south and given now the decision in the Legislature not to move the airport to the edge of the urban region, in the far corner of Dakota County.

This decision was a more final commitment than many people had thought it would be. During the search process more than a few had expected the decision would be not to build a new airport now but had believed there would be a decision to reserve land for a new site as a hedge against a need to relocate later. In the end the decision is not to land-bank either.

Continued on page 4
Regional Challenges: Devise New Ways for New Times

It’s beginning to sink in: We live in a 2.7 million person, 19-county "metroblob" that is spread out even more than Los Angeles on a persons-per-square-mile basis. At the same time as we cope with this intraregional growth, we’re being challenged to remain competitive with regions across the country, and the way we do it will go through a 2.7 million person, 19-county "metroblob." The "metroblob" is not the path to go through a 2.7 million person, 19-county "metroblob." It is possible that ground-based air traffic control will now give way to a new system ("flight-free") in which pilots using GPS aviation systems can control their own movement while ground-controlling only when some kind of problem appears. This avionics should make it possible to tighten up the spacing between aircraft, for example, planes could land-into-traffic on the parallel runways in bad weather. It may eliminate the costly nose-to-tail stacking of planes trying to land at bus hour by making it feasible for planes to approach the airport directly and to take off down the runway from different directions.

Wold-Chamberlain is the first airport to install Honeywell’s Peluson SLS-2000 landing system, a "differential GPS" ground station which Honeywell has been demonstrating to airports in the United States this spring. Aviation Week magazine said in April that this system is accurate to within five feet horizontally and six feet vertically. There are implications in all this for the cities around the airport. The metropolitan area may be looking at new-look 90s, when the airport eliminated the traditional noise-painting patterns. As Minneapolis officials were relocating the traditional noise-painting patterns when the airport eliminated the traditional noise-painting patterns. The Financial Times noted in April that Boeing expects to start work late this year on a 747-600X, to cut down on noise. It is possible that the MUSA would probably spread out even more than Los Angeles on a persons-per-square-mile basis. However, the University’s own data show that enrollment in General College is not a proxy either for low income or minority race. Only 18 percent of the students in General College are undergraduate students. Minnesota should ensure that funding need does not prevent a well-qualified student from attending postsecondary education or prevent the most talented applicants from attending from the University of Minnesota. However, the University’s own data show that enrollment in General College is not a proxy either for low income or minority race. Only 18 percent of the students in General College are undergraduate students. People of color, who are disproportionately poor and low income, face significant financial barriers to attending postsecondary education. Minnesota should ensure that funding need does not prevent a well-qualified student from attending postsecondary education or prevent the most talented applicants from attending from the University of Minnesota. However, the University’s own data show that enrollment in General College is not a proxy either for low income or minority race. In other words, the majority of General College students are white suburban students who are simply more fortunate financially. This record suggests that GC should not be considered the avenue for the state’s "metroblob" that is spread out even more than Los Angeles on a persons-per-square-mile basis.

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MINNESOTA JOURNAL

April 23, 1996

A noisy demonstration

Kenneth Osterberg, who ran a major business doing fee-schedules for airline companies, is now head of the Metropolitan Airports Commission that will soon be building a new airport in Minneapolis. Building in Minneapolis, used to tell a story he’d heard from an airline and airline officials about how the jets came to New York.

Neighbors around La Guardia airport were nervous, from what they’d heard. So the officials turned them to a demonstration. They took two-engine propeller planes, a Convair ("one of the noisiest planes in the air"), and gave it full throttle. It roared over the buildings.

Then they took the new Boeing 707, put in just enough gas to get it over to Kennedy airport, and used every runway for the takeoff. That jet just whistled off. The officials turned to the airport neighbors and said, "No problem!"

If Wold-Chamberlain doesn’t work out, the airlines’ major option will be to move flights to other metropolitan areas, whatever the state might think it is needed in the way of commitments to this area.

At the time they were voting the financial package to resistance in the state legislature. The story is that Governor and legislators asked about the company’s commitment to keep a hub in the Twin Cities area. But the Governor would not distinguish clearly between the old concept of "hub" (connecting passengers from small cities to the trunk-line airport) and the new concept of the "hub-and-spoke," in which a major carrier flies its trunk-line routes in and out of a single airport.

Absolutely, Northfield told the Senate committee, the Twin Cities will continue to be a hub. It was a major decision we just made. Let us hope for the best.

Ted Kellner is contributing editor of the Minneapolis Journal.

In its Dec. 17, 1997, report, Make the Present Airport Better-Make A New Airport Possible, the Citizens League called for a "dual-track approach that (1) emphasizes near-term improvements to expand the existing airport, and (2) sets up a process for finding, designing and acquiring a site suitable for a replacement airport. It called on the Metropolitan Airports Commission to acquire a specific site for the airport at the time when a replacement airport might be needed. Copies of the report are available from the League at 612-318-0791.


**Clariﬁcation**

Due to space limitations, information on the funding source for the Health Care Priorities project was omitted from Reinhard Priester's article, "Public voice needed in health-care decisions," as it appeared in last month's Journal. Financial aid is also being provided by the project's pilot study was provided through the Allina Foundation's Project DECIDE.

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**TIF**

Continued from page 5

TIF value grew rapidly during the 1980s, with an average annual growth rate of more than 23 percent. By 1995, the median TIF district size was $63,372, compared to an average of $21,300 in 1993. Following legislative restrictions on the use of TIF, growth rates slowed to about 10 percent in 1992 and 6 percent in 1993. Joel Michael of the Minnesota Department of Revenue believes that a rebound in commercial valuations was helped by the legislatively mandated state aid reduction provisions in 1995 and 1996 which would have resulted in a greater TIF value if captured by TIF districts beginning in the next year or two.

The number of TIF districts with captured value grew by five percent in 1995—from 1,273 to 1,338. About 61 percent of the districts grew during this period. The median TIF district size grew by five percent. The median TIF value grew by 11 percent to $63,372.

However, the number of TIF districts grew by five percent—1,338 in 1995. There were 1,436 TIF districts in 1996. Of these, 1,238 districts had a TIF value greater than zero. The median TIF value for districts with a TIF value greater than zero was $63,372. The median TIF value for all districts was $21,300 in 1993.

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Copies of the report are available from the League at 612-338-0701.

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Copies of the report are available from the League at 612-338-0701.
The overall goal is to bring companies into each other’s business. The main strategy for bringing this about is requiring local companies to identify and price separately their “basic service elements.” This means, for example, that competitors must be able to buy local switch service separately from transmission or buy the transmission messages of themselves from the utility company or business to the nearest telephone switching office. New local service providers can then purchase these services and put them together to resell to the end user as an alternative to the existing local provider. The separate pricing is known as “deregulation.” The bill opens new markets, which insure interconnection between old and new service providers.

If this bill is to deliver benefits to the user or consumer, the pricing of those network pieces must be cost based so that competition can grow. The FCC will set some guidelines in the areas of prices for unbundled service, access fees, and prices for interconnection, but the significant, detailed implementation will take place at the state level.

As many have observed, “the devil is in the details.” The groups who went home dissatisfied at the final shape of the local telephone deregulation bill needed a second chance to make their case in state legislatures. The National Union of Public and Utility Employees (NUPE) also participated in those discussions. They won the second chance to make their case in state legislatures, and the debate will continue.

The overall main kxn mond state-level networks, “kt at the providers. derails? messages neMeSt conmer, state observed, educational, residential must to have withing a ment, a number of state and local providers. have the value of the Department of State, the state’s service area. The Kinnamond recommended as the state’s service area. The 1996 series has been charged, and the Board of Governors.” The tax bill next year will not pass, the Senate. Abrams said he plans to introduce an abatement bill next year. “I’m very concerned about calling for a ‘global’ TIF budget. The global budget would set a limit on the amount the state would pay to new TIF districts. Before the budget is submitted, no additional TIF districts could be approved and “abatements would be the only thing left,” he said.

A global TIF budget “would cut down on the part-time legislator,” he said. Trying to work on TIF when others are working full-time to pass the revenue cap bill has been frustrating. Abrams said, “I want this tool to be available, but some excesses ought to be shut down.”

Dana Schneider is editor of the Minnesota Journal.
City high school classes drop 40% before graduation

The Minneapolis schools' policy of recording high school students' class ranks on each trimester's report card might be of dubious educational value, playing as it does to kids' (and parents') egos or angst. But it does provide a way of tracking changes in the size of a class as kids move through school.

Our daughter's freshman class at a Minneapolis high school had 404 students in the fall of 1993. Her most recent report card last month showed 297 students left in her junior class—a 26 percent decline in two-and-a-half years.

A call to David Dudycha, assistant to the superintendent, confirmed that this falloff is in line with districtwide trends. This year's junior class countywide had 2,269 members as of last Oct. 1, a 27 percent drop from the 3,114 count in the class at the beginning of freshman year in 1993. The drop in our daughter's class—both at her school and districtwide—has been somewhat greater than that in the two preceding years' classes by the beginning of their junior years.

But, according to Dudycha, trends suggest there will be even more falloff before graduation. Districtwide, this year's senior class was 31 percent smaller last Oct. 1 than at the beginning of freshman year in 1992. And not even all those kids will be walking across stages on graduation night in June. Dudycha said in any year generally about 40 percent fewer kids graduate than started school four years earlier as freshmen.

Where are these missing kids? Dudycha said the district doesn't track the kids because of the expense involved, but some haven't accumulated enough credits to graduate on time, others have moved out of the district and not been replaced by kids moving in and others have dropped out. You can bet there's plenty of research done when kids stop eating certain brands of cereal or buying certain brands of jeans. It would behoove us to put some resources into finding out why so many kids have "disappeared" from the schools and what their fate is.

—Dona Schroeder.

The recent debate over the fate of General College at the University of Minnesota was cast in terms of equity and access for students of color and low-income students. And the Board of Regents' vote to keep the college open was a largely symbolic vote for access.

Overlooked in the fray was how the state's method of financing postsecondary education systematically works against access for low-income students and students of color (who are disproportionately low-income). As John Brandl and Vin Weber pointed out in their Agenda for Change, the state allocates 90 percent of its total postsecondary appropriation to the state's public colleges and universities. The institutions use these grants to hold down tuition for all students—including middle- and upper-income students. Meanwhile, only 10 percent of the state money goes to grants and work-study for financially needy students. That amount of aid is not sufficient to remove the financial barrier the lowest-income students face.

Brandl and Weber (and the Citizens League) have proposed raising the share of need-based aid from 10 percent to 30 percent of the state's appropriation. If the University and the Legislature are really concerned about access for students of color and low-income students, taking a close look at this proposal would be a substantive beginning to meeting the challenge.—Janet Dudrow.

"Judge Rules in Favor of Trash Haulers," read the headline in the April 2 Pioneer Press. It should perhaps have read: "Judge Rules in Favor of Consumers," because Judge Doty's ruling supported the haulers' effort to get their customers the lowest price for refuse disposal.

Predictably, the decision was badly received by those county commissioners who have built a big refuse-disposal plant and who have been trying to bury its costs in charges the haulers would have to bill back to customers. The tax-costs for those commissioner decisions may now have to be made explicit. Some questions might usefully be asked about their decisions made in the '80s.—Ted Kolderie.

Sign of the times: Ten years ago, all of the world's 10 tallest buildings were in North America. With the expected completion of Shanghai's Jin Mao building in 1998, only five will be in North America. The others are in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia; Hong Kong; and Kaoshing, Taiwan.—J.D.

In the late stages of the legislative discussion in the '70s some quiet doubts were raised about the desirability of a multipurpose sports stadium. Among others, Tommy Thompson, then Minneapolis city coordinator, pointed out that baseball is played in the corner of a (roughly) square field; football is played in the middle of a rectangular field. The two don't combine well.

One evening a small delegation from the Citizens League went to the Northstar Inn to talk to Joe Robbie, by then managing partner of the Miami Dolphins. He talked candidly about the lifting of the prohibition against television blackout of pro football and about a stadium. The ideal solution, he said, would be the Kansas City solution: separate stadiums for baseball and for football, side by side. (Kansas City was even considering a cover that could roll back and forth from one to the other, making possible both a grass field and shelter from the rain.)

The CPL delegation played this back to those involved with the stadium question here, but it was clear the decision had been made early: The Metrodome would be a multipurpose stadium. Now, 20 years later, what're we hearing about? The need for separate stadiums.—

Minnesota women are far more likely to vote than are U.S. women in general, according to U.S. News and World Report (April 1). Minnesota's female voter turnout in the last three presidential elections was 73.7 percent; the U.S. average was 63.8 percent. Minnesota ranked fifth in the percentage of women voting, behind Utah, Connecticut, Wisconsin and Oregon.—J.D.

During the debate on education bills during the final days of the 1996 session, Sen. LeRoy Stumpf (DFL-Thief River Falls), brought up the notion of year-round school as a great potential for property-tax relief, particularly in suburban districts with surging enrollments. Taxpayers can't afford to build more and more multimillion dollar buildings and the state is not able to bail them out, said Stumpf, cochair of the Senate Education Committee.

On a year-round calendar, students and teachers could be divided into groups with staggered instructional and vacation periods. When one group is on vacation, another could use its space, allowing an increase in the school's capacity. "I think as we go forward with property-tax reform, this becomes a real legitimate issue. I think it's a much more efficient use of facilities," Stumpf says.—Betty Wilson.

"Take Note" contributors include Minnesota Journal and Citizens League staff members and Betty Wilson, a free-lance writer and former Star Tribune political writer.

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SECOND CLASS
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MINNESOTA
Board selects next study committee topic
Empowering public school sites to improve student achievement

Site-based management for public schools was selected as the next League study committee at the Board of Directors meeting on March 20.

The debate on school vouchers dominated the 1996 legislature's consideration of education reform. Somewhat lost in the rancor was a bill that would have required school districts to set in motion a process for providing the majority of public revenues— and authority over those revenues—to school sites, rather than school districts.

Other proposals were introduced that would have provided a smaller share of funding to school sites, but would have provided school site councils— composed of parents, teachers and administrators—to take on specified responsibilities.

While "site-based management" is not a new concept, site-based funding of schools is considerably more radical. Many of the specifics of implementing a true site-based funding scheme would be complicated. And unfortunately, site-based management and site-based funding proposals too often neglect to explicitly specify how the structural changes would—or should—affect student achievement.

The League study will address the fundamental question: What changes in institutional arrangements are needed to enable individual schools to improve student achievement?

There are other key issues the committee could address, depending on its timetable, including the following: Curriculum and staffing; school construction and capital expenditures; transportation; special education and related programs; assessment and achievement measurement; and support services.

The committee might make recommendations about the appropriate responsibilities that each of the various levels of government should have with regard to these issues.

The committee should also answer the question "how do we get there from here?" suggesting what steps would be needed to make the transition from the current arrangement to the needed system.

The League has a long history of involvement in education issues, having done five study committees in the last decade.

The League was an early and important force in the creation of Minnesota's nationally acclaimed public school "choice" programs. More recently the League championed Minnesota's charter school reform, the first of its kind in the country, and has urged expansion of the program.

How to get involved in League study committee process

Study committees are the core of the League's citizen-based research program. Once a study is selected by the Board of Directors all League members are notified of the opportunity to volunteer for the committee. People with no previous involvement or knowledge in the subject are encouraged to participate. These "generalists" bring fresh thinking and a different perspective to an issue. The chairperson(s) and committee members are approved by the Board of Directors.

A successful League study committee usually results in a "good idea." League study committees have had a long and impressive impact on public problem-solving in Minnesota.

An application to serve on the new League study committee will be mailed to all League members after chairpersons have been selected and dates and times of the meetings determined, which should be sometime in the next 30 days. The committee will meet weekly for three to six months. If the time, date or duration is a problem for you there will be other ways to get involved in the study. Please watch your mail for more information.
Mind-Opener series on managing urban growth draws record crowds

Leave it to regional government issues to whip up a good Citizens League crowd. That is exactly what has happened during the special Mind-Opener series, "A Tale of Three Cities: Managing Urban Growth."

In fact, with crowds averaging more than 100 people, this series is expected to shatter past Mind-Opener attendance records. If the crowds hold out—and there are indications that they may get even bigger—this series will set records for average and total audience size for any Mind-Opener series.

The series also has had a particularly positive effect on public outreach. Approximately half of all registrations for this series have come from non-members. At least half a dozen people were so impressed with what they saw that they decided to join the League.

The five-part series started on April 9 with Professor Philip Wichern of the University of Manitoba, who is visiting the University of Minnesota on sabbatical. Two days later, on April 11, more than 110 people came to hear Toronto planner Ken Greenberg discuss urban revitalization and densification.

Demand for this series is greater than seating supply. If you've registered but can't come, please let us know so we can accommodate someone else.

A similar crowd turned out on April 18 to hear Beverly Stein, chair of Multnomah County, one of three counties within the Metro region of Portland, Ore.

There is still limited space available for the two remaining luncheons in this regional governance series. On Tuesday, May 1, with David Gurin, acting commissioner of planning for Metro Toronto. Gurin will discuss the tools Metro Toronto has used to manage growth and keep its urban areas healthy.

Because of the time lag from the series' initial announcement to its final event, the League is asking people to check their calendars, and to call the League office if they no longer expect to attend. This will provide the League with accurate registration figures, and will allow us to open up additional seating for those who still would like to register for the final meetings.

The region governance series has been made possible with financial assistance from the Metro Council, Canadian Consulate and the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs at the U of M. Thanks in part to the support of the Humphrey Institute and MN Extension Services, the series is being taped for future broadcast and tapes will be available.

Season closes with work readiness

The Citizens League will wrap up its Mind-Opener season in May with a look at issues surrounding work readiness.

Lack of skilled workers, lagging education, and a decentralization of jobs are critical issues to both local businesses and workers in the Twin Cities—particularly workers who are harder to employ. The series will run on Tuesday mornings, May 7, 14, and 21.

The other two speakers are to be confirmed. Watch your mail for details.

This final Mind-Opener series will be held at the University Club, 420 Summit Avenue in St. Paul. Cost is $10 for members, and $15 for non-members.

Board election set for Friday, June 28

The Board, at its April 16 meeting, set Friday, June 28 as the date of the annual election of directors. Eight directors will be chosen by League members to serve three-year terms.

The Board also approved this year's Nominating Committee, which is chaired by immediate past president Bill Johnstone. Others serving on the committee include Board members Mike Christenson and Herman Milligan, and non-

Board members Jean King, Ronnie Brooks and Don Fraser. The Nominating Committee will propose a slate of candidates to run for the open seats.

Any member of the League may be nominated for director upon the written petition of 25 members of the League. The petition must be submitted to League Secretary Mary Anderson, in care of the League office, before May 24.

Mommy, where do statements come from?

The Citizens League captured headlines last week as it weighed in on the debate over the future of General College (see excerpts of the League's statement in this Minnesota Journal). The League urged the University of Minnesota Board of Regents to pursue an inquiry into alternative ways to better promote access and academic success of students of color and low-income students.

The League's statement on General College continues a longstanding League practice of reiterating its positions in the context of current policy debates. The General College statement was based on board-approved League positions in its reports Commitment to Focus: More of Both (1986), Minnesota's Budget Problem: A Crisis of Quality, Cost and Fairness (1993), and Choosing Reform, Not Declining Quality (1995).

The League has issued statements previously on a broad range of other issues, including the Regional Transit Board's proposal to the 1991 Legislature, a 1991 debate over testing health-care workers for the HIV virus, and a 1988 debate about changing the tax-base sharing ("fiscal disparities") law.

The General College statement and its predecessors are one way the League uses its past policy recommendations to advocate solutions for today's policy problems.