New area codes symptoms of revolution

by Edward Garvey

With the introduction of two new area codes in the western suburbs in February 2000, the Minneapolis-St. Paul metro area will have almost 32 million potential phone numbers. That is up from a relatively small eight million phone numbers at the start of 1998. How did this happen and happen so quickly?

There are four interconnected reasons. First, there is a dramatic demand for additional numbers for new or additional uses and services. Second, new competitive local telephone service providers are appearing on the scene. Third, the technological capabilities of the current system cannot keep up with these changes. Fourth, policymakers and regulators are making decisions affecting telecommunications. Seen from these perspectives, the area code additions are really only the most public symptom of the changes revolutionizing the telecommunications industry in Minnesota and across the nation.

Increased demand for numbers
Consumers and businesses want more telephone lines. Gone are the days of the single phone in each home. Now we have multiple lines: one for the parents, one for the kids, one for the fax machine and one to surf the net. On top of that, we have our pagers, cell phones, and mobile phones. Pretty soon we'll want one for our PalmPilots! Also, due to our region's economic vitality, more homes are being built, with more families and businesses that want more telephone numbers.

Hidden in this increased demand for numbers is the demand by large or growing businesses for blocks of 1,000 to 10,000 sequential numbers. The industry is trying to free up large blocks, but for competitive and technological reasons, such

Use alternatives to light-rail 'boondoggle'

by Tom Workman and Lynn Woodward

The proposed Hiawatha Avenue light-rail route is a financial boondoggle. A cheaper and better alternative is available.

The appointed representatives from Mn/DOT and the Met Council told the House Transportation Finance Committee that the Hiawatha railroad budget was $446 million. They promised an 18-station light-rail line, with three-car trains, running every eight to 10 minutes, finished in 2003.

Instead, we’re getting a $548 million, over-budget, “stripped-down” plan delayed until 2004. It runs two-car trains, has three fewer station stops and is missing numerous features promised to the Legislature.

We’re incredulous that with one fewer car and fewer stations to pick up passengers, rider projections have not dropped. Running two-car trains, more often, didn’t raise annual operating costs. Over budget, stripped down and late—light rail is not on track.

Hidden costs
The $548 million, $102 million over-budget proposal does not include over $150 million of “hidden” subsidies off-budget. (Editor’s note: Woodward says that he has now confirmed costs of $925 million, $449 million over budget.)

Since the legislative session, NSP announced a $37 million cost for moving utility lines from under Minneapolis’ 5th Street. That “hidden” cost, outside of the light-rail budget, will be added onto your Twin Cities electric bill. Minnegas-co and U.S. West utility-moving brings the figure to $70 million.

Coleman competition plan hits roadblock

by Kris Lyndon Wilson

St. Paul Mayor Norm Coleman’s vision of private companies competing with city employees to offer city services appears to have run into the realities of politics.

On Oct. 20, the St. Paul City Council voted 5-1 to place a major road block in the path of Mayor Coleman’s Compete St. Paul initiative, which would have opened up city services to managed competition. The Mayor’s veto of the ordinance was overridden by a 6-1 vote on November 3, and while amendments were approved the following week to exempt existing contracts with private firms, the mayor’s efforts appear to be choked off for now.

The council’s resolution prohibits the city from initiating managed competition of any city service until the city employees delivering that service have developed and implemented a performance plan and operated under it for two years. The development and implementation of performance plans must include the affected employees and their bargaining unit, who must first be given training in how to measure performance.
Transportation improvement: Roadrail or railroaded?

Viewpoint

by Lyle Wray

strategy, the reality is, however, that public officials who support rail are not putting forward any strong proposals to genuinely match their words of support for broader transit improvements. They just plot projects on telecommuting see, such as priority all-day parking meters for carpool carpenters. The list can go on.

The 2002 transit plan recently released by the Metropolitan Council includes many of these common-sense solutions and strives for a broader vision. The challenge will be to see whether the many eloquently implemented as fairly as they are being proposed. Thus far, the leaders who embrace the light-rail transit line do not pay and with growing legislative interest in the development of common-sense, effective solutions that normally elude those who seek to focus on one to the exclusion of all else. And the way things are, all too often, an intra-party debate can be expected to do what it can to get their piece and push everything else to the sidelines.

Transportation policy should not be treated like a game. Until we get beyond the shallow polarization that exists, many opportunities will be missed because people are afraid to challenge the leading ideas in their political climates. The analysis showed the Hiawatha light-rail line.

On Balance

“...for those to whom much is given, much is required. And when at some future date the high court of history sits in judgment on each of us...our success or failure...will be measured by the answers to the four questions: First, Did we live in peace among our fellow men? Second, Did we make our fellowmen's burdens lighter? Third, Were we truly men of integrity...Finally, were we truly men of dedication...?” -F.J. Kennedy.

Twin Cities, with new cost-benefit analysis showing that the light-rail transit line does not pay and with growing legislative interest in the development of common-sense, effective solutions that normally elude those who seek to focus on one to the exclusion of all else. And the way things are, all too often, an intra-party debate can be expected to do what it can to get their piece and push everything else to the sidelines.

Light-rail proponents insist that it is a unifying strategy that speaks of many travel options than reasoned analysis.

problem, they insist, despite plenty of evidence and decades of experience that prove that pouring more and more millions into transit congestion in the long run. Not to mention, the chances of getting major freeway expansion done in the current political environment are slim indeed. Look, for instance, at the fate of the late relatively modest I-35W expansion.

Instead of picking sides and supporting in this increasingly harmful battle, policymakers should be giving more attention to the larger transportation picture and the many good ideas that fall between building roads and buying trains.

Let’s try a more relatively low-cost, defensible alternative, one that willrink to an obsolete roads-only mentality.” The paper praised (Nov. 17) Minnesota's Minneapolis and Saint Paul campuses, that combine the primary advantage of rail-restrictions with the local benefits of sharing the same rail and highway investments.

instead of picking of teams and seeing who wins and loses, we should be looking at the larger picture of common-sense solutions. Otherwise, our region will end up being railroaded much as the rest of the country.

The Minnesota Journal

Editor–Lyle Wray

Contribution Editor – Ted Kolden

Sketches – Roy Hanson

The Minnesota Journal (0114-9411) is a publications of the Citizens League, a nonprofit organization of college students and others committed to a better Minnesota.

MnSCU plans integrated metro system

From Crosstown Connections: Academic Plan for the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area, Minnesota State Colleges & Universities located in the metropolitan area] will be a high integrity integrat-

ed higher education system that is similar to a single institution for students...

Goal One: Provide students enrolled at each Alliance institution access to programs and services offered by any other Alliance institution.

Complete articulation of courses between the various programs at Alliance institutions.

No unnecessary course/prrogram duplication in new and existing undergraduate and graduate programs at Metro Alliance institutions.

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St. Paul Pioneer Press (Nov. 4) said that the “system is not a complete solution to the battle of railroad safety...” and “to hold and done its job. But it said that without the Hiawatha LRT line the metro area “would be in a desperate situation...” while depriving wastefully into the countryside. The future belongs to metro areas that offer transportation and lifestyle choices, not to those that cling to an obsolete roads-only mentality.”

Edwards report: “...for those to whom much is given, much is required. And when at some future date the high court of history sits in judgment on each of us...our success or failure...will be measured by the answers to the four questions: First, Did we live in peace among our fellow men? Second, Did we make our fellowmen's burdens lighter? Third, Were we truly men of integrity...Finally, were we truly men of dedication...?” -F.J. Kennedy.
"The most important issue in our criminal justice system is the lack of coordination and a lack of communication" between Minnesota’s different jurisdictions and law enforcement agencies. Public Safety Commissioner Charlie Weaver told a group of Citizens League members in November that a new Open Meeting on crime in Minnesota.

Minnesota’s 1,100 different criminal justice agencies each operate their own independent systems in tracking criminal histories, making it extremely difficult or even impossible for different law enforcement agencies to communicate with each other and share information. According to Weaver, even close neighbors find that they have little way of knowing if some individuals have long records of repeat offenses. “If you’re arrested in Anoka last night (and you’re arrested today in Minneapolis, they don’t know you were arrested in Anoka last night), there’s no way to talk to each other.”

Minnesota lacks statewide records on many of the components of a person’s criminal history, including minor infractions, probation status, and compliance with court orders. “The bottom line is that our system has no way to track someone from arrest, to jail, to court, to probation,” Weaver noted.

Minscu

Student participation and goal attainment by 10 percent in three years.

Outcomes

Increased participation rates of metropolitan area high school graduates who attend college one year after graduation.

Increased participation and goal attainment of underserved students in the metropolitan area.

Increased participation and goal attainment of minority workers in the metropolitan area.

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The rise of local competition is demanding an increase in local numbers in comparison to the demands for both new telephone numbers and line changes by new telephone service providers. As just long-distance service was opened up to competition like Sprint 15 years ago, local telephone service is being opened to competition, too. As these new competitors enter the market, they will have to compete with the local telephone companies, even if they do not have a single customer. Thus, tens of thousands of numbers will be connected to these new competitors.

The growth of competition is having a much more dramatic effect than just exhausting telephone numbers. The new competitors are replacing monopolies, who have traditionally been subject to government regulation. In the future it will not be regulators who will control the market, but rather the market forces established by what the new technologies can achieve. Competitors in St. Cloud, Worthington, Princeton and Battle Lake are finding that they can offer lower costs, higher quality and other services which will enable their own work, rather than relying on the incumbent monopoly telephone company's system.

The rise of competition forces fundamental changes in how the local, and possibly federal, monopoly public telephone companies are regulated. When and how should the newly formed local telephone company from strict regulatory oversight? On one side, regulation must weigh the need to regulate the incumbent utility to protect its investments in fixed and long-term capital. But new and untested competitors also require regulation in order to fulfill their competitive duties.

The problem becomes one of matching how much area and how many telephone numbers must be allocated to each new company.

Technological constraints

As we think about the changes going on in the telecommunications industry today, it’s clear that in many instances we are building upon a computer network being asked to do things in ways and for reasons quite different from the way it was designed, built and operated until now.

The telephone system is a gigantic computer connected by telephone companies to connect each other by a series of wires that carry electric or digital signals to a large number of local computers called "switches." These switches run huge software programs that control the network and are connected to other switches and ultimately to the correct phone. Like all computer networks and telephone communications system is continuously being improved upon and technology is developed. However, these improvements are generally batched into a series of incremental improvements. This pyramiding makes economic sense, but it makes each incremental improvement more difficult, because it must be compatible with each previous system. Without this mass system, the telecommunications network was designed to accommodate only the telephone dial-tone patterns and the needs of monopoly telephone providers. These technological constraints directly affect the area code issue. We are not running a perfect system of switches.

The Minnestoa Public area certainly does not have 92 million numbers. The eight million numbers in the original 612 area code are not free from the telephone company

The numbering plan we have is an anomaly. For years we have been living in the telephone company's world, but the plan must be changed. The number of numbers in areas underdosed can be transferred to high-demand areas.

When you dialed a number, the area code tells the computer which region of the country you are calling. The next three digits identify the exchange and number within the area you are calling. The last four digits identify the phone that should ring. To make this system work, the computers were programmed to allocate numbers in 10,000 blocks. This makes sense with the development of geographic areas called exchanges, which explains why the first three digits of your telephone number are always the same.

This is also why, when you move from one area to the another, you cannot keep your old telephone number. And why, most recently, you lost your old telephone number if you changed local telephone service, because of how the computers are programmed.

How does this new network’s technology affect the area code issue? If they can do the trick. But, the technological constraints have created a number allocation problem. The computer is not programmed so that numbers in underused areas can be transferred to high-demand areas.

To make matters worse, upgrade capacity is not enough. We now want to make the phone calls faster. So the Minneapolis Light rail station will have a lot of digital traffic quickly. And if that is not enough as wireless, communications and satellite technologies come on line, they will have to be designed for the new network, which requires changes.

Regulators’ role

Policymakers and regulators are the final factor affecting both the area code and the revolution in telecommunications industry, It is the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission, working with the Legislature, the Attorney General’s Office, the Department of Commerce and the stakeholders, that is developing the rules of the future telecommunications marketplace and that decided how to introduce the new area codes.

Policymakers and regulators will have a major impact on the future of this question, because do we make sure every Minneapolis has adequate access to the telephone market? How should “adequate,” telephone service be defined? Is it availability in every geographic area? How should we subsidize those who either cannot afford such adequate telephones and cannot afford both telephone and computer service? Is it poor or because they live in high-cost rural areas How are we going to address the consistent track of arbitrage by someone else to exchange with other exchange, because of how the computers are programmed.

An additional Phase II might include a six-state, “smart,” semi-exclusive transitway from the Minneapolis to the Twin Cities near Fort Snelling. MNDOT estimated the cost at $44 million. We estimate the cost at $42 million. The old and new systems were designed for the Hiawatha line will cost $34 million. The “advanced” buses would run “modified” lines 7F route every 10 to 15 minutes, at 18 station stops—just like the Legis- lature-promised light-rail propos- al. Phase 1 “better” buses also cost $8.5 million, and there will be a total of 150 buses.

Policymakers are developing the rules of the future telecommunications marketplace and that decided how to introduce the new area codes.

Once you get phone service. Such quality ser-

Question for the future: How do we define a telephone number? Is it the area code issue and the revolution in telecommunications marketplace fund-ed by the area code?

If you want to ride to the airport, take an existing bus route number 80. If you want to ride to the airport, take an existing bus route number 80. It essentially follows the proposed bus-to-rail or rail-to-bus loses the monthly fee, your drive-alone cost is $375 per month.

If you want to ride to the airport, take an existing bus route number 80. Second, we could lease their buses. The 3,000 bus-to-rail or rail-to-bus loses the monthly fee, your drive-alone cost is $375 per month.

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Voter distrust of government down, centrist is back

The newest analysis of voters from the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press (Nov. 11) found that distrust of government is down and centrist is back. The middle of the electorate is no longer dominated by angry, economically stressed-out voters; rather, the most important swing constituency—the undecided voters who can determine who wins an election—is among the most moderate segment of the voting public.

Political cynicism, while still extensive, has lost some of its edge and there is less interest in political outsiders than there has been for several years. (More details can be found at www.people-press.org.) —Janet Dudrow

Meanwhile, the Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy at Harvard is embarking on a major study on “The Vanishing Voter.” They’ll be surveying the electorate every week during the 2000 presidential campaign to determine why citizens follow or ignore the campaign.

One of their first polls (Nov. 30) found that few Americans are paying attention. Why? “It’s too early in the campaign” was the reason given by 54 percent. Thomas Patterson, Harvard professor and director of the project, says, “The public’s attention is a scarce resource and we ought to treat it that way. If the effect of a long campaign is to dull people’s appetite for the election, then we ought to listen to them and find ways to shorten it.” —J.D.

A local health-care expert rejects the notion that screening patients’ requests to doctors was managed care. “Priced care,” he calls it. So he is positive about recent moves, as by United Healthcare, to let the physicians make the initial medical decisions, then for the HMO to review the pattern of doctors’ decisions over time for cost and quality.

Some doctors are now writing frantic letters to the New York Times protesting this accountability. Their notion, it seems, is to return to the fee-for-service arrangement in effect before HMOs appeared; to what Anne and Herman Somers described in 1976 as the notion that “reimbursement (should be) guaranteed for costs that are neither controlled by competition nor regulated by public authority and in which no incentive for economy can be discerned.” —Ted Kolderie.

Last spring, officials at Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park in Maryland took an unusual step to reduce litter and park cleanup costs: they removed all 250 of the park’s trash cans. Although park officials acknowledge that the approach seemed a little counterintuitive at first, it has been “surprisingly successful.” The volume of trash in the park has dropped by 75 percent and litter has decreased dramatically. And park rangers who formerly had to spend time emptying trash cans are now able to take care of other necessary resource management and maintenance tasks. —Dave Chadwick.

Washington, D.C., whose poor public schools are legendary, now has 11 percent of its total student enrollment in charter schools, according to the Center for Education Reform. In New York, in contrast, the state school boards association has joined the state’s American Federation of Teachers chapter in filing a legal challenge over the establishment of the state’s first three charter schools, asking the court to annul the charters. —Dana Schroeder.

In January the public will get its best look ever at the decisions Minnesota school boards make about allocating revenue. Districts are to report to the state by Jan. 30 the revenue by school, adding up the dollars that come with each student and multiplying by the number of students at each school.

The ’99 law does not provide for the schools to decide how the money is spent: That authority remains with the board. At a meeting in January, however, each district board must pass a resolution reallocating the revenue to match its expenditure budget. The allocation reports will be public. Watch your local newspaper. —T.K.

Take Note

No reason to distrust these policy pellets.

A suburban reporter for the Pioneer Press saw recently what a lot of people had missed: that “alternative education” now accounts for about 10 percent of K-12 enrollment in Minnesota. These are the schools quietly set up over the last 30 years for kids for whom regular instruction doesn’t work, often kids the schools don’t want in their classrooms.

The smaller size and different methods that characterize these schools are apparently popular with students. With about 100,000 students “alternative education” is effectively the biggest district in Minnesota, larger than Minneapolis and St. Paul combined. —T.K.

Interesting, and staggering, facetoid: According to Hennepin County Attorney Amy Klobuchar, there are 500 people in Hennepin County alone driving around with at least 10 DWIs. —Phil Jenni.

A new study by RAND argues that government agencies could make dramatically wider use of e-mail for personal communications with citizens, reducing costs and improving service. Drawing on case studies of the Health Care Finance Administration and the California Economic Development Department, the study’s authors suggest that the government could save considerable time and money in postage and administration for routine information distribution and claims processing. Not to mention, the government will need to begin using e-mail simply to keep up with the demands of the public, who are increasingly going online to shop, work and learn.

The report recommends more access to address security and legal issues, as well as the ‘‘digital divide’’ between those with access to computers and those without. The report also suggests establishing a national system of e-mail addresses, possibly administered by the U.S. Postal Service. The full report is on the web at www.rand.org. —D.C.

A legislative budget staffer was shaking his head about the forecasts for a $1.6 billion state surplus. “Everything now depends on the growth rate,” he said. The economy doesn’t have to crash: If the state spends or rebates the surplus and the growth rate just declines by 0.6 we’d be in trouble.” —T.K.

Quietly, tests are proceeding at Wold-Chamberlain airport on the new technology for controlling landings. Aircraft can now use the Global Positioning Satellites (GPS) to calculate their location quite precisely. So rather than lining up for landings nose-to-tail, five miles apart, the incoming planes can approach an airport from various directions and land with shorter approaches.

If put into use for scheduled airlines, the new system would likely change noise patterns around the airport. The PR releases and newspaper reports are not making it clear quite how. —T.K.

"Take Note" contributors this month include Minnesota Journal and Citizens League staff members and Janet Dudrow, policy analyst at Dorsey and Whitney.

Minnesota Journal
Citizens League
Suite 500
708 S. Third St.
Minneapolis, MN 55415

PERIODICALS
POSTAGE PAID
AT MINNEAPOLIS MINNESOTA

December 14, 1999
Welcome

New and returning members
H. Leonard Boche
Brad Brown
Mark B. Dayton
Carter Delaittre
Reginald Edwards
Walt Fehst
Renee Fredericksen
Maria Gomez
Charles and Marilyn Green
Sharon A. Johnson
Tom Johnson
Daniel Kelley
Jim Long
Jerry Loomis
Terry Lydell
Catherine McGraw
Neala Schleuning
John and Marcia Stout
Richard E. Student
Charlie Weaver
Charles Welling
Thanks to recruiter
William Hedrick

Census 2000 counting on you

After much debate over whether or not to use statistical sampling, the 2000 Census will begin on schedule in just a few months. This decennial process, by which the federal government is constitutionally required to count every resident of the United States, raises several important issues.

This series will examine what we can expect from the 2000 Census. How has the size, age, wealth, ethnicity and geographic location of Minnesota's population changed over the past ten years?

We'll also examine the implications of the Census. What is meant by an "undercount" and what are its ramifications? Who isn't being counted and why? The series will also look at one of the major political outcomes of the Census — legislative redistricting.

Tax deductions expanded to all donors

The 1999 Minnesota Legislature passed the Charitable Giving Tax Relief Act which provides a tax deduction for all charitable contributions—even if donors are nonitemizers and use the short form tax return.

What does the Charitable Giving Relief Act do? The Minnesota Tax Code provides a 50% tax deduction for non-itemizers for charitable contributions over $500. After an individual or couple who are nonitemizers donate over $500 in money or goods to any combination of charities, additional contributions are eligible for the 50% deduction. For instance: a couple that donates $1000 to nonprofits in 1999 will be able to deduct 50% of everything over $500. So that taxpayer would get a $250 deduction from his/her taxable income.

Which nonprofits are eligible charities? Any 501(c)(3) is an eligible organization. Contributions to any public charity, including churches, synagogues and mosques are eligible. The Citizens League is also eligible.

What do taxpayers need to do to claim the deduction? Taxpayers should save receipts for goods and money contributions. Tax forms for 1999 and for all subsequent years will include instructions and a line where nonitemizers can report their charitable giving for the year.

Make the League your favorite charity

Twice a year the Citizens League asks its members for financial support beyond the regular dues. By now you should have received the League's 1999 Annual Report and a contribution card. Please make a contribution to the League as you consider your year-end charitable giving.

The League relies on this year-end campaign. Individual members account for nearly 30 percent of the League's budget. The recent stock market run-up makes this an especially good time to give gifts of appreciated assets. For more information, please call 612-338-0791.
Millennial Musings, or how we learned to stop worrying and love Y2K

Forget the millennium. Who cares about the end of the century. At the Citizens League we like to think in decades. So we thought it would be fun to take a look back to see what the League newsletter was concerned with at the end of the 1950s, 60s, 70s and 80s. — Here’s a quick tour.

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**CL News headlines on December 31, 1959***:

**Action Group Formed to Push for Adoption of Joint Committee on Charter Reform proposals**

CIVIC (Charter Improvement Voluntary Information Committee) was appointed by the League to help implement changes to Minneapolis’ city charter.

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**CL News headlines on December 25, 1979***:

**League Adopts Desegregation Report, Urges More Choices**

This seminal report set the stage for the League’s subsequent work on choice and options programs which culminated with the charter school legislation in 1991.

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**Top Officials Call for City Input to Public Schools**

Minneapolis Mayor Al Hofstede and City Council President Lou DeMars told a League breakfast meeting that the Minneapolis School Board ought to be under the umbrella of city government. (St. Paul Mayor Norm Coleman suggested something similar at a recent Mind-Opener.)

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**In other news**: Minneapolis Park Superintendent Charles Spears reported that half of Nicollet Island would be devoted to a new park; the League’s past presidents met; the Public Affairs Directory was available.

* Since the League was founded on Valentines Day in 1952 it’s only fitting that it would date a newsletter for Christmas Day.

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**CL News headlines on December 20, 1969**:

**State Group To Explore Issues In the School Report**

Governor Harold LeVander proposes a commission to explore issues raised by a League committee, chaired by John Mooty, on Stretching School Salary Dollars.

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**Journal headlines on December 12, 1989**:

**State revenue shortfall of $161 million seen**

Revenue Commissioner Tom Triplett said the Legislature will have to cut spending, raise taxes, dip into reserves or hope for an upswing in the economy. He also announced that he would be the new executive director of the Minnesota Business Partnership.

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**Minnesota needs materials policy to assist economy and environment**

David Morris argued that the toxic-waste crisis, the garbage crisis, greenhouse effect, ozone depletion and groundwater pollution are all the result of a misuse of materials. He urged that state policy shift from a reliance on hydrocarbons to carbohydrates. (Today, Morris heads the Institute for Local Reliance and is editor of a publication called the Carbohydrate Economy.)

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**Other News**: Former research director Paul Gilje was interviewed by National Geographic; The joint Light Rail Transit Advisory Committee was eyeing fiscal disparities for additional revenue for LRT; League released telecommunications report.

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Have a safe and happy holiday season!