Spending, hiring control and hard data provide school improvement mechanism

by John Kostouros

State officials have long tried to improve K-12 schools by dictate. Hundreds of laws, regulations and administrative rules have been promulgated to force schools to do things deemed necessary to ensure students receive an adequate education or to address a pressing social problem.

In the 1990s that command-and-control strategy has come under attack as inadequate at best, wrong-headed at worst. The global trend toward decentralization of authority in all sectors of the economy has reached public education about the same time frustration was building about the persistence of the gap between what graduates know and can do and what employers and postsecondary institutions say is necessary for success in their worlds.

The pressure to reduce burdensome regulations has left policymakers pondering the question of how to ensure the adequate quality of public schools. Who polices the schools in a deregulated environment? How will we be sure that some schools aren’t falling woefully short of preparing their students for a successful future?

There are several possible answers to these questions and Minnesota has moved in a number of different directions at once:

- Creating state exams administered at several grade levels to all students. This has proven to be not only difficult, but politically

Continued on page 5

Public voice needed in health-care decisions

by Reinhard (Jake) Priester

Allocating health-care resources is perplexing to policymakers. Since resources are scarce relative to needs, choices among competing health-care services, technologies and needs are unavoidable.

The Minnesota Legislature has recently changed course in this area. In 1995, it debated the set of health-care services to which everyone should be guaranteed access. This broad initiative—defining a Universal Standard Benefits Set—died with the overall demise of comprehensive health reform. In its stead, legislative action on health-resource allocation has once again become piecemeal: a requirement last year, for example, that all insurers provide coverage for autologous bone marrow transplants for breast cancer and a likely mandate this year for 48-hour maternity stays.

The underlying issue, however, remains the same: the challenge is to decide who gets what when there is not enough to go around.

Need for public participation

The public has so far not been involved in this debate. As a result, Continued on page 6

State's telecommunications landscape marked by network, policy fragmentation

by Milda K. Hedblom

First of two articles. The information buzz in Minnesota is strong and new developments have appeared all over the state—in telecommunications businesses, the community sector, education and government services.

Business developments

The ground rules for businesses have been fundamentally altered by both the federal Telecommunications Bill of 1996, passed in early February, and the Minnesota telephone deregulation bill passed last year. A common goal of both bills is to move away from regulating who can be a service provider and from regulating the profits of those providers.

Prices for long-distance service had declined and prices for local service had risen even before these recent legislative changes. That trend is likely to accelerate, but the idea is that the new possibility of competition for local residential service will eventually make price shopping for the best deal among telecommunications providers a way of life.

These developments are creating new pressures among Minnesota's telecommunications businesses. U.S. West is under fire in Minnesota and has agreed to set up a $30 million fund to help offset service problems brought to the attention of regulators. The small telephone companies around

Continued on page 7
New ways of learning can support new ways of working

We also talk about a whole series depleted and they need assistance in of diversity, educational aspirations

Healthy Communities for Youth

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by putting on a raincoat.

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helps ease the constraints of

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and the employer benefit from

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on the job they can perform.

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video conference cameras and sof-

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puter with a learning coach and with tutorial groups of up to five

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New law makes one telecommunications industry

Edited excerpts of remarks by Randy Young, governor, and Edward F. O'Keefe, president, Minnesota Equal Access Network Services, Inc., to the Citizens League on March 5.

Finally, after 10 years of work and hundreds of negotiations and philosophical struggles, on Feb. 1 Congress did what everyone had been waiting for: It passed the Telecommunications Act of 1996, which specifically deregulated many elements of the communications industry. We won't see any more confusion in this marketplace. We won't think we any longer have a telecommunications industry and a cable industry and a radio industry and a newspaper industry and a radiophoning industry. We will instead see things from a very technological perspective and from a legal and regulatory sense.

The act is divided into five areas: restoration of competition, divestiture of monopolies, another dealing with telecommunications equipment manufacturing, another dealing with cable TV, a fourth dealing with Internet broadcasting and a final area dealing with the Internet and on-line services.

In each of these areas, cross-market entry barriers have basically been eliminated, allowing the creation of providers in a one-to-many arrangement. The barriers in the broadcast-a-the number of outlets you could own, the number of channels you could own—in many areas have been eliminated or relaxed substantially, allowing for higher concentrations of markets, higher concentrations of market power, relaxing of merger rules. That's what we're going to see in the telecom field, and we're going to have to begin to look at it in a practical way to make sure that are made to be adhered to and everyone's playing the game. If you finance obligations on the incumbents are so that they don't keep new entrants from getting into the market, but at the same time making sure that those obligations are balanced. New entrants don't have an opportunity to get into the market, but at the same time making sure that they can access and use some services.

On the upside, we won't see the average price for a telephone service change. Universal service will change. Everyone won't be supported with the same rate. The few who may have thought they would control something less than five percent of the money spent on telephone service will still have that control.

The next bill, the Xmas 68, Business Partnership, the Xmas 68, League and other reform-minded with giving school districts control over most education money, without prescribing how schools would make their decisions. The bill would have the direct 59 percent of its education fund money to be school districts and allow the schools to decide how much authority over that money they would have. Much they would have with the school district and how they would make those decisions. The bill would give each school district a board oversight responsibilities for for budget and hiring decisions.

The two approaches are quite different. The bill attempts to instill accountability by providing the incentives, the business, principal-member relations, parent and community member and, perhaps, students—making limited decisions in the classroom. The business Principal bill attempts to instill accountability by giving each school real control over spending and hiring decisions and giving districts the responsibility of monitoring the performance of schools.

The approach of using a form of representative democracy to improve schools is probably too serious. While it is true that the new MIRTS system gives community members a broader perspective on the school operational, we'll have some people who are true that just putting a couple of noneducators on a board is not going to guarantee that anything will change. For starters, the parents, students and community members who choose to serve on these boards usually have some formal training in education and often serve for relatively short terms.

Second, few councils have real authority. They have no budget authority or school performance review authority. One bill, backed by the major education organizations and sponsors of Rep. Steve Kelley (DFL), would create school councils. The councils should operate, who should be on them and what they should do. The councils would control something less than five percent of the money spent on education. We're going to have to effectively decide what is not going to be allowed in the councils. We won't be able to allow policies that are not going to be allowed in the councils.

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The satisfaction surveys ask sophisticated questions that need to be provided. The few who may have thought they would control something less than five percent of the money spent on education. We're going to have to effectively decide what is not going to be allowed in the councils. We won't be able to allow policies that are not going to be allowed in the councils.

When we started this as a pilot, everyone was very suspicious, says, 'Don't do this experiment. Don't eliminate it today we'll have a revolt on our hands.'

John Kostosky is a Minneapolis writer. He has served on two school site councils and observed many others.

Edmonton

Continued from page 1 unpalatable. Most Minnesota edu-

ators oppose them.

by the system more custo-
maker driven, by allowing students to choose what school, attend what school, make what decisions, take to college courses during high school and to attend charter schools or schools in other districts as existing schools. (A bill backed by the bill author, the one that would require an approval by the students themselves; the one that would allow students to choose schools within districts as well as districts that are outside the district. This consumer-driven approach has offered alternatives for significant numbers of parents, although it has not been embraced by the education establishment.

Including noneducators on dis-
cuss participation process. The MIRTS 

and school decision-making bod-
ies. The hope is that these non-
educators will improve the rigor-
ous evaluation on schools than edu-
cators have been willing to impose on themselves, as well as create an environment for schools to make better decisions. The council has determined that local school districts are limited influence over administrative and budgetary decisions.

Giving school sites real control over budget and hiring decisions and making the decision school boards have this degree of authority now.

Two bills introduced during the current legislative session have addressed the idea of school councils. One bill, backed by the major education organizations and sponsors of Rep. Steve Kelley (DFL), would create school councils. The councils should operate, who should be on them and what they should do. The councils would control something less than five percent of the money spent on education. We're going to have to effectively decide what is not going to be allowed in the councils. We won't be able to allow policies that are not going to be allowed in the councils.

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resource allocation decisions are made—in both the public arena and in private settings—without a clear understanding of the public’s values and preferences. But the public’s perspective is essential. Decisions regarding the use and distribution of health-care services involve both technical information about the services’ benefits and burdens and judgments about how these benefits and burdens ought to be valued. Technical or scientific information alone is not sufficient; value judgments are also necessary.

For example, science can tell us that a new drug costing $2,000 more than an older drug can reduce the chance of death for heart-attack patients by five percent. But no amount of scientific information about whether the lower mortality rate is worth the additional cost will lead doctors to take a false value judgment. And only the public—the current and future beneficiaries—should make such judgments.

A new project developed by the Health Futures Institute, an independent think tank, is intended to address the lack of public participation by beginning a much-needed public conversation about health-care priorities. The project, “Health Care Priorities: How Do You Make Your Case?” is designed to engage the public in discussions on three fundamental questions concerning the allocation of resources in our health-care system:

1. What is a fair distribution of health-care services?
2. Should personal responsibility for health affect access to health-care services?
3. How should new technologies be used and paid for?

The Health Care Priorities project is designed to focus on underlying principles and values, move the public from opinion to “informed judgment,” and bring the public’s preferences to bear on resource allocation decisions.

The project incorporates both an educational component and a participatory component involving community roundtable discussions. The two-hour roundtables are roughly divided into equal segments for each of the three fundamental resource allocation issues. At the end of the roundtable, participants complete a survey on health-care resource allocation.

Pilot Study

The Health Futures Institute has recently completed the project’s pilot phase, held in three communities:

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Information

MNet: A Pyramid or a Platform?

The Minnesota Network (MNet) is designed as a public domain system to integrate telecommunications and information services for the Health Care Priorities Project.

3. Persons responsible for their health problems should pay more for health care. Over 81 percent agreed that persons whose behavior or lifestyle puts them in need of health care should pay more for their care. However, while financial incentives may be an acceptable, stronger measure—such as denying care to those who don’t take care of themselves—were rejected.

4. The public should play a major role in defining a standard for new technologies. Fifty-eight percent of the participants rejected the idea that health-care professionals alone should be in control of access. Instead, the public should be the ultimate decision-maker about the development of new technologies.

Healthcare

Continued from page 1

are recognized and accepted.

Should personal responsibility for health affect access to health-care services? Through this project, it is an important one. It represents the views of Minnesotans who have participated in a deliberative process required to talk with one another, so they can weigh and decide how fellow citizens think and feel about an issue. The survey then gives participants the opportunity to present their “informed judgment” on health-care resource allocation.

However, before the public’s voice can play an influential role in policy making, information about the available health-care resources, the Health Care Priorities project would first need to involve a larger and more representative sample of Minnesotans. Nonetheless, the pilot study’s preliminary findings encompass four themes for health-care resource distribution that policymakers—along with public and private settings alike—should consider:

Health-care resources are not distributed fairly. Although there is no clear agreement on the level of health-care access in Minnesota, participants agreed that people need access to health care, and everyone should be guaranteed access to the same level of health care.

Rounds of discussion—ideal, at least one in each Minnesota county—to provide more debate, participation, and understanding of health-care resource allocation issues.

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Community access

In addition, roundtable participants were asked to assess the Internet’s potential to connect the public to community resources, including both health and non-health services. Communities also began to realize that the Internet is a powerful tool for helping communities pool their buying power. It is easy to measure benefits of the Internet and Clay Counties to bring all the telecommunications traffic from the state level and to the county level through the Internet and access to school and library computers.

An intriguing question is whether the partnership and networking building will be adequate. The public is interested in access and information needs and information needs in the future will be quite remarkably different from the past—so, too, the provision of services. One of the features of the Minnesota Public Service Commission is that the Internet is the high degree of fragmentation, both in networks and in services, that must be addressed.

Network Fragmentation

In 1996, Minnesota’s 10 separate statewide telecommunications networks, 13 regional data networks, 35 educational video networks, and more, are hindered by a lack of quality of the public-sector system. The unsatisfactory trend in service is toward open systems that allow access and information services are available. It is not profitable enough to lay cables or lay them in a monopoly environment. The challenge is to make sensible public choices, even as we work together to identify common needs, to find new ways to provide services, and to support those who want to experiment with open systems that allow access and information services. The next step is to develop an Internet-based Regional Network that can connect the 12 communities of which every one around the state has access. The education community is the Internet. The challenge is to make reasonable public choices, even as we work together to identify common needs, to find new ways to provide services, and to support those who want to experiment with open systems that allow access and information services. The next step is to develop an Internet-based Regional Network that can connect the 12 communities of which every one around the state has access.
Legislators consider tax-base sharing for Iron Range

Tax-base sharing on the Range? House and Senate committees have said, “Ya, you betcha.” As this Journal goes to press, both the House and Senate tax bills include provisions that would establish a commercial-industrial (C-I) tax-base sharing program for the Iron Range.

The program, modeled after the Twin Cities metropolitan area program known as “fiscal disparities,” would apply to the communities in Minnesota’s Taconite Relief Area—all of Cook and Lake Counties, most of Itasca and St. Louis Counties and portions of Aitkin, Crow Wing and Koochiching Counties.

Since 1977, taxes paid by taconite producers (mostly located in the older cities, such as Eveleth and Hibbing, on the eastern edge of the range) have been shared among all the communities within the Relief Area. Recently, commercial development—mostly of newer, nontaconite businesses—has picked up in the Grand Rapids area and elsewhere on the Range. That trend has prompted debate about how to share more equitably the benefits of all commercial development, whether taconite-related or not. The fiscal disparities idea has been introduced in past sessions, but this is the first attempt that has passed committee muster and been sent to the floor.

Under the program 40 percent of the growth in C-I tax base after 1990 would be shared among Relief Area communities. If the proposal becomes law, the program would go into effect for taxes payable in 1998.—Janet Dudrow.

Suburban hospitality. In the debate over affordable housing and livable-wage jobs, many suburbs have received not-so-flattering press coverage regarding their hostility to low-income people and families. One suburban community, however, has taken the proactive approach in helping families succeed.

The City of Eden Prairie, in conjunction with the Met Council, has set up a “family mentoring” program to provide friendship and support to help low-income families move into livable-wage jobs in Eden Prairie.

Since its inception last May, the program, modeled after the House and Senate ties, most of Itasca and St. Louis Area—all of Cook and Lake Counties. Recently, commercial development—mostly of newer, nontaconite businesses—has picked up in the Grand Rapids area and elsewhere on the Range. That trend has prompted debate about how to share more equitably the benefits of all commercial development, whether taconite-related or not. The fiscal disparities idea has been introduced in past sessions, but this is the first attempt that has passed committee muster and been sent to the floor.

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Since its inception last May, the HOPE program (Housing, Opportunities, Partnerships, Employment), which serves 15 low-income families with volunteer families.

Ron Wirtz.

The Legislative Auditor’s new report should put to rest a lot of the scare talk about Minnesota’s program to let juniors and seniors overlap high school and college. The students do take serious courses and do perform well. High schools have responded by offering more challenging courses themselves: the number of schools offering Advanced Placement courses has more than doubled and the proportion of students taking AP tests has tripled since the postsecondary option came in, in 1985.

The program somewhat complicates life for the high schools. But the kids like it a lot and it’s nice to find that most—not all, but most—high school administrators put the benefits to the kids ahead of the inconvenience to the schools.

Ted Kolderie.

Talk about policy schizophrenia. One bill before the state Senate’s Taxes and Tax Laws Subcommittee on Property Taxes creates lower property tax rates for landlords who convert warehouses to apartments or renovate downtown apartment buildings that are at least 20 years old. The bill’s author, Sen. Carol Flynn (DFL-Minneapolis) said that the bill might relieve congestion because if people “lived downtown, we wouldn’t have to build any more capacity.”

Apparently, Flynn’s message was lost on the subcommittee, as it also approved a proposal, sponsored by Sen. Leonard Price (DFL-Minneapolis), to allow tax-increment financing (TIF) to be used to develop land previously given “green acres” property-tax relief. Green acres laws are designed to delay development and help family farms remain viable in areas with rising land values. The bill allows TIF to be used to locate businesses on green acres land in the metro area.

Tax incentives for eating up farmland, most of it on the fringe of the region...So much for relieving congestion.—Phil Jenni.

The state’s plans to expand the use of managed-care arrangements for Medicaid recipients may turn in an unexpected direction this legislative session. Having established managed-care programs in the seven metro-area counties, the Minnesota Department of Human Services has begun to add counties in Greater Minnesota (four counties around Duluth and three around St. Cloud) to the program. It has also started planning in earnest to develop managed-care arrangements for Medicaid recipients with disabilities or in long-term care.

However, bills supported by the Association of Minnesota Counties would turn over to counties much of the responsibility for planning that expansion and contracting with managed-care companies or provider organizations. The bills have progressed in both the House and the Senate.

Provider organizations have not objected to the bill because they think it would create opportunities for direct contracting. Others point out that the introduction of a new county layer of administration might leave fewer dollars for payments to providers.

Allan Baumgarten.

You’ve heard of intelligent transportation systems...now there are way-too-smart-for-their-own-good parking meters. Governing magazine (February 1996) reports the latest high-tech public service gadget, now being tested in a dozen cities across the country:

The new parking meter uses sonar sensing, infrared and molecular compression to detect when a car arrives and leaves, how many cars park in a given spot and exactly how late the guilty parker is. The meter shows the exact moment the time expires and flashes a red light to hail the parking enforcement. The information is later used to fine the motorist and to help city officials analyze patterns and fine-tune parking enforcement.—J.D.

Coming soon to your town: While construction of affordable housing units is occupying much of the region’s attention, the Met Council HRA has begun a program called “HomeChoice” that moves families in high-poverty areas to locations with low poverty.

Similar to the Gateurx program in Chicago, eligible families must receive Section 8 rent assistance and live in a Minneapolis or St. Paul neighborhood with more than 50 percent of families living in poverty. The Met Council HRA provides additional support, including counseling, job training and transportation access.

This year, the program involved only a handful of families. But the Council hopes to serve 100 families in 1996.—R.W.

“Take Note” contributors include Minnesota Journal and Citizens League staff members and Allan Baumgarten, a consultant on health-care policy and finance.

Take Note

"Friends share all things."—Pythagoras

Note

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<th>Minnesota Journal</th>
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<td>Citizens League</td>
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<tr>
<td>Suite 500</td>
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<td>708 S. Third St.</td>
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<td>Minneapolis, MN 55415</td>
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Second Class Postage Paid at Minneapolis, Minnesota
Welcome New Members

Janice Andersen
Delroy Calhoun
William Coyne
Bernadine Feldman
Laura Lee Geraghty
Mary Hipp
Brad Larsen
Kathy Marker
Colleen Moriarty
Nancy Rys-Nicol
Louis Smith
Evon R. Stanley
Melanie Tyler
Jennifer Windsor

Thanks to recruiter
Mike Christenson

Citizens League
708 South 3rd Street # 500
Minneapolis, MN 55415
Ph 338-0791 Fax 337-5919
citizen@epx.cis.umn.edu

The Citizens League promotes the public interest in Minnesota by involving citizens in identifying and framing critical public policy choices, forging recommendations and advocating their adoption. Suggested dues for membership are $50 for individuals and $75 for a family membership. Other categories are also available. For more information on membership, please call 338-0791.

National experts headline regionalism series

Congestion. Low-density, large lots. The MUSA line. Urban sprawl.

Regional growth and development is a hot topic in the Twin Cities. The Citizens League will add some light to the heat of this topic by exploring regional governance in a month-long series featuring speakers from Toronto and Manitoba, Canada, Portland, OR and Indianapolis.

The Twin Cities metro region has a reputation for a high quality of life. Our region has low unemployment, higher than average household income and lower than average cost of living. Life by most accounts is very good here.

But increasingly, people are asking whether current growth and development patterns are undermining our long-term regional health. Urban decay, political fragmentation, and other pressures have created fiscal, environmental and social problems that overlap rigid, municipal boundaries.

We are not alone. Cities nationwide are increasingly looking to regional governance for solutions to problems that plague them.

Just what should be the role of metropolitan government in managing regional growth and development? The Metro Council is still a model for regional government. But its jurisdiction includes only seven counties. The Twin Cities area now encompasses as many as 24 counties. How do we meet the planning and administrative needs of the real region?

This special four-week Mind-Opener series will feature five meetings, and explore a variety of issues concerning regional governance. The series will feature two breakfasts and three lunches (see box for exact dates and times).

On April 9, Phil Wichern will lead-off the series with an overview of regional government models in North America.

Wichern is a visiting professor at the University of Minnesota, coming from the University of Manitoba, where he has studied and published extensively on Canadian and American models of regional government.

Ken Greenberg, a principal in a Toronto planning firm, will talk on Thursday, April 11 about urban revitalization and densification, and the role of the environment and public transportation in urban life.

On Thursday, April 18, Beverly Stein, chair of the Portland-area Multnomah County Board, will talk about the role of regional citizenship in creating government that works.

On Thursday, April 23, John Krauss, former deputy mayor of Indianapolis during its consolidation into the Unigov city/county government, will speak on Tuesday, April 23.

The series will wrap up on Wednesday, May 1 with David Gurrin, the acting commissioner of planning for Metropolitan Toronto. He will speak about tools to manage growth, and about how Toronto dealt with problems now being faced by the Twin Cities.

The meetings will be at the University Club, 420 Summit Avenue, St. Paul. The cost is $10 for members and $15 for non-members. Space is limited, so we encourage you to preregister. For more information call the office at 338-0791.

Philip Wichern
University of Manitoba
Tuesday, April 9
7:30 - 9:00 a.m.

Ken Greenberg
Toronto
Thursday, April 11
11:45 a.m. - 1:15 p.m.

Beverley Stein
Portland, OR
Thursday, April 18
7:30 - 9:00 a.m.

John Krauss
Indianapolis
Tuesday, April 23
11:45 a.m. - 1:15 p.m.

David Gurin
Toronto
Wednesday, May 1
11:45 a.m. - 1:15 p.m.
A diverse group of about 40 gathered on Friday, February 23 for the first of the League's Legislative Network Breakfasts. Rep. Alice Johnson (DFL-Spring Lake Park), Chair of the House Education Finance Division and Rep. LeRoy Koppendrayer (R-Princeton), ranking Republican member of the same committee, discussed education reform issues.

Their conclusion: Meaningful education reform is not likely this year. They cited the short Legislative session as one reason. More importantly, real opportunity for change usually comes in the budget-building year of the biennial cycle (odd-numbered years), they said.

Rep. Koppendrayer reviewed the dire economic predictions. With federal funds drying up, and more of the state budget going into prisons and seniors' health care, it's unlikely the Legislature can commit new funding to K-12 education. In that funding environment, reform must occur without more money, he said.

But the money issue aside, Koppendrayer insisted that the system is not working. Real reform must involve greater accountability. He said that's why he agreed to carry much of the governor's reform agenda: more charter schools, statewide student testing and the graduation rule, open enrollment, site-based management and the new graduation rule. She said the Legislature will provide funds to try some new, promising programs. Among them are: a "discipline" pilot project aimed at preventing kids with behavioral problems from being expelled, all-day kindergarten, early intervention and prevention programs, accountability and improving technology in schools.

Transportation was the topic for the next Legislative Network on March 8 with guests Sen. Carol Flynn of Minneapolis, chair of the Senate Transportation and Public Finance committee, and former Rep. Bill Schreiber, who now heads intergovernmental relations for MnDOT and sits on the Metropolitan Council.

Sen. Flynn outlined the stalemate that for years has prevented movement on the issue of transportation and transit funding: Rural legislators want a higher gas tax, which is constitutionally appropriated to building new roads and bridges, while metropolitan legislators are holding out for a larger share of tax revenue for an improved metro-area transit system.

Sen. Flynn advocated a transit system supported by an expanded sales tax, not the current property tax, and contended that most successful large urban systems are operated that way. However, she said, that idea appears dead for this session and the Legislature instead will tinker with lesser issues.

Mr. Schreiber said it's clear the state cannot afford to build enough highways to meet the demands of commuters and rural citizens. Instead, he suggested, a mix of carpools, traffic management using advanced technology, encouraging employers to let workers telecommute, mass transit, and some improved capacity should be funded. He considers a metro-area tollroad inevitable - the only remaining question is where the first one will be.

He said to be successful, transit systems must be more user-friendly and the new GPS technology could help get buses where they're supposed to be on time so connections are more reliable.

Schreiber noted that the Metropolitan Council would be updating its transportation plan for the metro area this year, and said he's advocating changes in the philosophy to loosen restrictions on capacity. But he argued that transportation issues are not what drives people's desire to live further and further away from the central cities. He believes that freeway development occurs after settlement in new areas due to demand, not the other way around.

The Legislative Network Breakfasts continue on Friday, March 22 when Sen. Gene Merriam (DFL-Coon Rapids) and Rep. Dave Bishop (R-Rochester) will discuss fiscal reform. The Legislative Networks will end April 12 as leaders from both houses review the Legislative session. Meetings are from 7:30 to 9:00 a.m. at the University Club of St. Paul.

Phone Fun

Have baby-boomers and Generation Xers retreated from public life?

An intrepid group of younger League members tackled that question in an informal phone survey conducted on March 9 at the offices of Spano and Janecek.

The Leaguers called more than 60 people, most younger than 35, to find out what motivates or prevents them from getting involved in public policy.

This is the first step in a project to help the League connect with the next generation of civic leaders.

Volunteer callers were: Mark Chapin, Linda Ewen, Dyane Hang, Kelly Johnson, Sean Kershaw, Louis Smith and Board members Mike Christenson, Jim Dorsey, Marie Grimm and Sara Janecek.