

MINNESOTA Journal

A PUBLIC POLICY MONTHLY FROM THE CITIZENS LEAGUE

Volume 18, Number 9 • September 18, 2001

Despite the rough press a few charters received this spring, most Minnesota charters are doing well. And the movement is helping stimulate improvement in schools in this and other states.

See page 5.

INSIDE

School completion report **2**

Viewpoint: Buckle up for change **3**

Charting charter schools success **5**

On Balance: roads, farms and smoking **7**

Take Note: policy tidbits **8**

Growth requires land use and travel choices

by Gary Barnes

Over the next 25 years, the Twin Cities area is expected to grow by around 500,000 new residents and add probably half that many new jobs. As a result of that growth, the Metropolitan Council is predicting a seven-fold increase in traffic congestion by 2025. It is often claimed that land uses that better support non-automobile modes of travel, such as public transit and walking, can significantly reduce traffic congestion by reducing the amount of automobile travel that new (and current) residents generate.

There is considerable literature to support these claims. However, almost all of it suffers from the same fundamental flaw; there is little or no effort to consider alternative explanations. For example, central city neighborhoods are different from suburban ones in almost every way, so to automatically ascribe all observed behavioral differences solely to the style of land development seems biased and unconvincing.

Over the last few years I have been looking at the question of how land use influences travel choices. I looked at historical comparisons, at central city versus suburbs, and at different cities across the U.S., aiming throughout to consider every explanation of travel choices that seem at all plausible. This research led me to be rather skeptical of many of the claims in support of high-density, mixed-use residential development as an answer to our transportation problems.

Travel time, speed, and distance

One common claim is that densely populated areas generate fewer vehicle miles traveled (VMT) per capita than more spread out development. This is true, but misleading. I have found (as have many others) that the amount of time people spend traveling in an average day

shows remarkably little variation, no matter what the land use or the transportation system. Differences in VMT arise to a large extent because of differences in average travel speed. The average person spends about 70 minutes traveling on the days when he or she travels. Very few locations within the region, and very few other cities, have averages more than five minutes different from this.

A particularly striking point is that this number hasn't changed for several decades. A previous researcher identified average daily travel times for Twin Cities travelers in 1958 at about 69 minutes. When I did a similar calculation for 1990, it was about 71 minutes. The interstate highway system substantially increased speeds, but apparently people responded by changing home and work locations, and making more trips. It seems to be a common belief that people will take advantage of opportunities to shorten their travel times, but the evidence doesn't support this. As individual trips get faster, the savings are always used up elsewhere.

Commuting and recreation

There is some variation in average total daily travel times from one place to another. Areas with poor job access have longer average commute times, and this appears to explain all of the variation in total travel times. Daily travel time by non-workers shows hardly any variation from one place to another. The same is true of non-commute travel time by workers, which if anything gets shorter as access worsens. Central city residents have much better access to shopping and other non-work opportunities, both locally and regionally, but again they use the easier access to broaden their choices rather than to

www.citizensleague.net

Land use, continued on page 4

City schools fail to make the grade

Study committee reports on school completion rates in Minneapolis and Saint Paul

On March 28, 2000 the Citizens League Board of Directors charged a study committee with examining the question of how schools can improve high school graduation rates and outcomes for core city youth. In August, the League released the committee's finding in a report titled: "A Failing Grade for School Completion: We Must Increase School Completion in Minneapolis and Saint Paul". What follows is a summary of the report. The full report is available at www.citizensleague.net

The number of students who drop out of high school in Minneapolis and Saint Paul school districts is unacceptably high. Minnesota's relatively strong statewide graduation rate obscures the crisis occurring in the state's urban schools. Less than half the students who enter the ninth grade in the Minneapolis public schools graduate within four years. In St. Paul, the picture isn't much better. Slightly more than 50 percent of all students who enter ninth grade stay in school until graduation day. In today's world, failing to graduate from high school portends a lifetime of low-level jobs, depressed earnings and a lowered standard of living. People without at least a high school diploma are unlikely to earn a family living wage.

Everyone has a stake in increasing graduation rates. A well-educated work force is vital for the metropolitan area to remain competitive in an economy that demands ever-greater skill levels. The metropolitan region simply cannot afford to abandon so many of its young people to low skill jobs. An economy short on labor cannot afford to leave anyone behind. The youth that disappear from our schools can show up in the criminal justice and social service systems. On moral grounds alone we cannot stand by while as many as 3,000 young people are set on a track to economic hardship each year in Minneapolis and Saint Paul.

There are many reasons why students drop out of high school. In addition to academic problems, the Citizens League Study Committee found a range of social forces that impact student achievement, including family background, pregnancy

and mental health. But the charge to the Committee was to "examine what our schools can do to improve the alarmingly low completion rates (emphasis added)."

Our belief is that despite external factors, schools must do better at engaging students and become more responsive to their needs in order to keep them in school.

The Committee found examples of many promising practices to boost graduation rates. These practices range from better early childhood education, to smaller schools to more individualized learning. In short, early intervention and a shift toward an educational system that is more responsive to its students needs.

We are encouraged by the recent efforts of the Minneapolis and Saint Paul school districts to address this issue. Their willingness to acknowledge the problem is a step in the right direction. But ultimately, despite the promising practices and best intentions, there simply is not sufficient pressure on the system to make the necessary improvements. Good intentions and promises of improved performance are not enough. To genuinely succeed in engaging all students, the Minneapolis and Saint Paul school districts need to set measurable school completion goals, establish clear rewards and consequences for success or failure, restructure the notion of high school, and improve schools capacity for taking the steps they need to engage more students in learning.

We recommend:

▲ **The Minneapolis and Saint Paul districts should immediately set a goal of achieving a four-year high school completion rate of 80 percent within the next five years.** Individual schools should set goals and be held accountable, reporting their performance to the community on a regular basis. Indicators must be clear and consistent, and the schools should adopt a data-driven system of accountability.

▲ **There should be clear rewards and consequences for school completion outcomes.**

▲ **The traditional notion of high school should be restructured for greater flexibility.** The traditional, fixed, four-year framework should be redefined. High school should be formally reorganized as a process that is completed when a student has met all the academic requirements and is ready for the next level of education or work life. For many students this opens up the possibility of early "career-tracking" and reduces the need to choose between high school and work. For some students it might mean completing high school requirements in less time. Others may require more time. Charter schools and other alternatives should be expanded to support innovation. And the use of Post-Secondary Options should be expanded to connect large numbers of at-risk students with the real world of work through career exposure and technical education options.

▲ **Build capacity for school success.** Some changes will take more time. The Legislature should invest now in early education. But we must also step up efforts to improve teacher quality in the most challenging schools. We recommend developing a system of enhanced compensation and resources for teachers who agree to work in the toughest schools.

The current dismal outcomes on school completion are unacceptable and continuing the status quo threatens the vitality and livability of our community. The public, the Legislature, executive agencies, parents, teachers and administrators all hold part of the solution for achieving greater school success for students in our core cities. We must do better for our students and our state. Yet schools have a major responsibility in meeting this challenge. Carol Johnson, Superintendent of Minneapolis Public Schools said it well when she told the Committee: "If we can't improve graduation rates, we shouldn't be in the business." **MJ**

Viewpoint

From the Executive Director

Fasten your seatbelts, Minnesota!

by Lyle Wray

The roller coaster ride of change that took place in the 20th century looks like a mere warm up compared to the pace and depth of change facing us in the 21st century.

For much of the last 50 years, the Citizens League has tried to look beneath the surface, to get at the root causes, and to identify the shifting dynamics of issues like taxation and regional growth. The League anticipates and frames issues so our community can "skate to where the puck will be," as hockey great Wayne Gretzky put it. By becoming aware of emerging trends, we help to shape Minnesota's policy landscape and to position our state and metropolitan region to respond quickly and effectively to the coming challenges.

Beneath the headlines of the daily press, there appear to three major sets of trends driving the "crisis du jour": demographics, technology and economics. The saying "demographics is destiny" may be a cliché, but it is true nevertheless. We are living through major demographic shifts that are likely to impact a range of issues, from education funding to health care to public safety.

The signs are becoming clearer every day that there are big changes ahead. In

Minnesota, seniors age 85 and older are the fastest growing population group, in percentage terms, but the public's appetite for big increases in long term care expenditures seems very limited. We are already experiencing chronic labor shortages in the health care professions, and the number of new entrants to the labor market is expected to plummet by about 2010. Of the state's 5 million residents, approximately 1.3 million are baby boomers eyeing the door to retirement. Headlines proclaim that half of the state's civil service corps will depart within a decade or so.

New Minnesotans are also making their presence felt. They are settling both in the metropolitan area and in Greater Minnesota, and many of them are young families with children who are testing the preparedness of local school districts.

Demographic shift are rumbling across the legislative landscape too. The majority of Minnesotans now live in one major metropolitan area. Political redistricting is likely to result in more legislative representation for the metro, but with a majority of voters now self-identifying as independent, the shift may do little to benefit the established political order.

Sorting through the interplay of demographic changes will be difficult work. Social Security is a cash transfer from current workers to retirees. But the downward trend in the number of entrants into the labor force to pay for retirees' benefits is very sobering. The current 50 percent school completion rates of ninth graders in the two core cities' schools might cause some taxpayers to demand a better showing for our future workforce.

Despite the wobbly economy, there is little doubt that information, computing and telecommunication technologies are infiltrating all quarters of society, from banking to manufacturing to higher education, and that new technologies are providing greater productivity without a substantial risk of inflation.

The announcement this month that stem cells can be turned into blood cells

continues an expected avalanche of developments in human genetics and biotechnology in coming decades. Advances in materials sciences, including nanotechnology—the fabrications of very small machines—are transforming the way we make things. There is no time for complacency, however, despite recent reports identifying Minnesota as a top 10 state for high technology jobs, and the University of Minnesota as the beneficiary of a record number of national government grants. The "knowledge economy" won't wait for laggards. Minnesota must develop a highly skilled workforce and high quality information and traditional infrastructure to enhance our attractiveness as a place to live and invest.

The time is right for Citizens League's proposal for a Northstar Research Coalition to accelerate research and development spending in the state. We must also see to it that more, and not fewer, low-income students go onto post-secondary education.

The globalization of production and distribution of goods and services is expanding. As a result, we have lost and are losing a disproportionate number of the local headquarters of Fortune 500 corporations. Maintaining the historically strong sense of corporate engagement in the community could prove to be difficult. Engaging new types of enterprises in corporate citizenship should be a top agenda item for our region.

These three major drivers of change—demographics, technology and economics—mix together in complex ways that will provide significant challenges for policymakers. The Citizens League can help smooth the way by identifying issues early, framing the challenges, anticipating the local impact and suggesting solutions. All signs point to future of change at an ever-quicken pace. We should keep our seatbelts fastened as we go about the work of helping our region and our state explore new opportunities and meet new challenges. **MJ**

The Minnesota Journal

Publisher—Lyle Wray

Editor—Dana M. Schroeder

Contributing Editor—Ted Kolderie

Sketches—Ray Hanson

The Minnesota Journal (ISSN 0741-9449) is a publication of the Citizens League, a nonprofit nonpartisan Twin Cities public affairs organization, 708 S. Third St., Suite 500, Minneapolis, MN 55415. Phone: (612) 338-0791. Fax: (612) 337-5919. E-mail: info@citizensleague.net. Web site: www.citizensleague.net. Matthew L. Ramadan, president. Articles and commentary are drawn from a broad range of perspectives and do not necessarily reflect League positions on policy questions. The Journal is published once a month. Periodicals postage paid at Minneapolis, MN.

Annual subscription rate for nonmembers is \$40 for 12 issues. Orders may be placed at (612) 338-0791 or by mail at the above address.

Postmaster: Send address changes to the Minnesota Journal, 708 S. Third St., Suite 500, Minneapolis, MN 55415.

reduce their total travel time. Part of the point of mixed-use development seems to be that people will reduce their travel by shopping locally; but the evidence doesn't make me confident that this will happen.

What about transit?

To the limited extent that central city residents spend less time in cars than do suburbanites, the difference seems to arise from higher transit use. And higher transit use is strongly correlated with high residential density. Again, the basic findings of the literature are true, as far as they go. But there is more to it than this. First, the effect is not nearly as strong as many seem to believe. Even big increases in residential density have small effects on transit share, and because transit is such a small part of the total market, even big increases will have small impacts on the amount of auto travel.

A better way to increase transit usage would be to focus on the work end of the trip; this appears to be a far stronger determinant of transit usage than is the residential end. Central city residents traveling downtown have about a 27 percent transit share, to non-downtown destinations the number plummets to 3 percent (same people, same residential density, but very different outcome when the destination changes). And suburban residents traveling downtown have a 16 percent transit share (in 1990, it is likely higher now), despite the fact that many suburban areas are not even directly served by transit, and almost none could be considered "transit-friendly."

Job access and commute times

Another common belief about land use is the importance of mixing jobs and housing so that people don't "have to" travel so far to work. But as with the other beliefs, my research indicates that this idea may be overrated. The typical resident of the outer suburbs has 1,600 jobs within a mile of home; 9 percent work this close to home. In the central city, the average resident has 6,700 jobs within a mile of home, yet just 12 percent work this close to home. I found that a broader measure of regional access explained commute times much better; roughly speaking, the number of jobs within a 20-minute drive matters much more than the number within walking distance.

It appears that few people are willing to substantially restrict their work options in order to have a short commute. The average central city resident has more than 500,000 jobs within a 20-minute drive of home, yet half choose to commute farther than this. If none of these half-million jobs are good enough, then what difference will it make mixing a few more into people's neighborhoods? People with long commutes have made a conscious choice in order to gain some benefit. They are not the victims of bad land use policy.

Conclusions and policy implications

I am often asked whether these results, based on 1990 data, will still hold up given the recent increase in congestion. I believe that they will, for two reasons. First, the overarching point of all these findings is that people adjust their behavior

in response to their circumstances; congestion is just another factor. Second, these findings are also true in Los Angeles (average daily travel time: 75 minutes); a city that is much more congested, and has been for a long time. Looking across cities in the U.S., one sees a surprisingly wide variety of land uses and transportation systems, yet the general results still hold.

The total amount of automobile travel is certainly going to be significantly larger in the future no matter what we do. The question is not whether we can prevent it, but what we should do about it? In particular, whether the value of reduced congestion is high enough to justify the necessary investments (especially given the extra congestion created by construction). A less costly solution might be to replace the gas tax and other fees with charges based on when and where trips are made. Paying more to drive at congested times could spread traffic out enough (and give an additional inducement to transit use) to make a difference, reducing the need for costly and disruptive new investment. **MJ**

Gary Barnes is Transportation Economist at the State and Local Policy Program at the University of Minnesota's Humphrey Institute. Much of the research described in this article was done with Prof. Gary Davis as part of the Transportation and Regional Growth (TRG) project under the direction of the University's Center for Transportation Studies. More information on TRG, including reports, is available at www.cts.umn.edu/trg/

Early Childhood Education Programs

Minnesota's Head Start program serves a larger portion of children in poverty than most other states' programs do, according to a Program Evaluation Report of the Office of the Legislative Auditor, January 2001.

In fiscal year 2000, Head Start programs had funding sufficient to serve 45 percent of the state's children, ages three to five, in poverty...Head Start service providers in the Twin Cities region were funded to serve about 33 percent of three to five year olds in poverty, while providers in many rural areas of Minnesota were funded to serve more than 60 percent of the three to five year olds in poverty...Statewide, Head Start costs over \$5,000 per participating child and provides 12 to 30 hours of direct services to children per week, for nine to 12 months a year.

Minnesota supplements the federal Head Start program with

state funding, and in fiscal year 2000 state funds accounted for 24 percent of Minnesota's total Head Start revenues...The Minnesota Legislature has authority to determine how state-appropriated Head Start funds are allocated, and it should consider an approach that relies less on federal allocation practices, which do not adequately reflect the location of families in poverty.

The Legislature first appropriated state funding for Head Start in 1988... Total state funding slowly increased until fiscal year 1998, when it jumped from \$11.5 million to its current level of \$18.75 million, a 61 percent increase once adjusted for inflation...State Head Start funding in fiscal years 1998 and 1999 was used both to increase the number of families served and to increase the hours of service provided. **MJ**

Charter schools learn the ABCs of success

by Joe Nathan

Are you enjoying your cell phone, and your car? These are only two of the innovations that have come about because Americans are allowed to be the kind of entrepreneurs that the charter school movement encourages.

Despite the rough press a few charters received this spring, most Minnesota charters are doing well. And the movement is helping stimulate improvement in schools in this and other states. Despite intense opposition from major education groups, In the last decade, we have gone from one charter school in one state, serving less than 100 students, to almost 2500 schools in 37 states, serving over 600,000 youngsters.

Competition can help stimulate improvement. In 1996, the Legislative Auditor asked Minnesota high school principals about the impact of the Post-Secondary Options Law. This act allows high school juniors or seniors to take college courses, with state funds following them, paying costs of tuition, books and supplies. More than half of the principals reported that one impact of Post Secondary Options was greater cooperation between high schools and colleges.

Competition from charters has helped convince Minnesota school districts to improve programs, and create new options for students. For example, since 1989, the number of students served by area learning centers has gone from about 4,000, to more than 120,000.

We should be concerned about charter schools that are not doing well.

We also need to do a better job of working with sponsors. Some sponsors provide excellent supervision. Unfortunately some don't provide much oversight.

But in most places, the idea is working out well. Here are just a few examples that illustrate the possibilities. Consider Twin Cities Academy in St. Paul. It's small, and its results are awesome. This public charter school enrolls 178 St. Paul and suburban students in grades six through eight. The floors of the building, constructed in 1912, shine—and so do the students. Thirty-six per cent of TCA's students are from low-income families, compared to 18 percent in suburban North St. Paul/Maplewood, and 15 percent in West St.

Paul-Mendota Heights, where TCA's principal and some of its teachers formerly worked.

But 93 percent of TCA's students passed Minnesota's eighth grade reading test, compared to 78 percent in North St. Paul/Maplewood, and 77 percent in West St. Paul-Mendota Heights. Seventy-eight percent of TCA's students passed the state math tests, compared to 69 percent in both North St. Paul/Maplewood and West St. Paul/Mendota Heights.

TCA Principal Liz Wynne used to be a suburban public school principal. She moved, she says, because she "was impressed and intrigued by the chance to make a difference without a lot of red tape and bureaucracy."

Lloyd LaFountaine has taught in public schools for 32 years, the last few at TCA. He says: "This school takes me back to the best of the 1950's—small schools where you get to know the students and their families." TCA's walls hold posters with quotes from Aristotle, near signs about what students want: "encourage others when they're down, volunteer, smile," and what they don't want: "leaving trash, laziness, put-downs, gossiping."

New Visions is another charter school that has not attracted much newspaper attention, but has attracted educators from throughout the United States. Bob DeBoer, a veteran public school educator, designed the school to help young people who have experienced significant problems in traditional schools. Many New Visions' students have some form of disability. But an outside evaluator found that the average NV student makes 1.5 years worth of progress for every year the student attends the school. New Visions students wear uniforms, and the teachers have high expectations. But they also care passionately about the students, and use unusual techniques to help them.

For example, they teach the kind of "mind relaxation" popular in Asia to help students learn how to respond to frustration, not by yelling, screaming or disrupting but by relaxing briefly, and then moving on. Many New Visions parents told me last spring that this was the first school

Chronic Offenders

Over a recent four-year period (1996-99), 5 percent of offenders were responsible for 19 percent of the criminal convictions in Minnesota, including 37 percent of felony convictions. A Program Evaluation Report of the Office of the Legislative Auditor, February 2001, shows that compared with other offenders, a much larger share of the crimes committed by chronic offenders are property crimes such as theft, burglary, or financial card fraud.

A majority of the felony convictions were in the Twin Cities metro area, but close to two-thirds of chronic offender misdemeanor convictions occurred outside the Twin Cities area...During the 1996-99 period, 54 percent of the chronic offender felony convictions occurred in the Twin Cities metro area, compared with 47 percent of gross misdemeanor convictions and 37 percent of misdemeanor convictions...Because sentencing policies emphasize imprisonment of violent offenders, property offenders are less likely to be incarcerated than other offenders.

Although Minnesota has the lowest state imprisonment rate in the nation, it is unclear whether a significant increase in that rate would save more for crime victims and communities than it would cost Minnesota taxpayers...Minnesota's per capita prison, jail, and probation populations have all more than doubled since 1985...Among the 50 states, Minnesota has the sixth highest number of offenders on probation per state resident.

A more targeted approach directed at chronic offenders, particularly those with any violent behavior in their history, may have greater merit...Given the share of serious crimes committed by chronic offenders, the Legislature may wish to encourage counties or local criminal justice agencies to implement pilot programs.

Because many chronic offenders cross county lines and existing state databases do not provide information on some offences, the implementation of a comprehensive statewide database would help district court judges and local criminal justice agencies to deal more effectively with chronic offenders...The Minnesota criminal justice system would also benefit from an increased internal emphasis on evaluation of programs and performance. **MJ**

Charters continued on page 6

their children wanted to attend, after having serious problems at other schools.

Students said the same thing to U.S. Secretary of Education Richard Riley when he visited the school several years ago.

Charter schools are helping public schools and districts to improve. . . school districts are changing their educational services and operations in response to the creation of charter schools in those districts.

Riley was so impressed that he invited DeBoer to speak to about 1500 people at a national charter school conference.

Because of its success, the state gave New Visions two grants to help other schools replicate their program. Last year New Visions worked with 29 Minnesota schools, and this year they will work with about 40 Minnesota schools. Schools in other states also have asked for help from New Visions. Several have adopted some of New Visions' approaches and found these ideas help their students.

Minnesota New Country School in Henderson received a fair amount of publicity after it received \$4.3 million from the Gates Foundation. This is a school with a strong academic record, serving a

cross section of students. MNCS responds to virtually all of the emerging research about the kind of education teenagers need. It's small, and has high, measurable standards.

MNCS begins the school year with a family/student/advisor conference, so that the first contact between home and school is positive, and educators, students and families understand each other. Students make several public presentations per year. Each student has a computer and workspace, similar to the work environment many professional adults encounter. Some students have been hired by companies or non-profits to create and maintain web sites. The Gates grant allows MNCS to replicate itself. And there are plenty of people all over the country who are trying to learn from and use lessons from this school.

That brings us to the second key question—is the charter movement helping to produce broader improvements? A University of California study indicated it is, especially in states where there are multiple sponsors. As the report pointed out, district officials "acknowledged—sometimes begrudgingly—that charters had served to jump-start their efforts at reform. While they initially opposed charters and the chartering had been accomplished outside their authority, they felt that district schools ultimately had benefited from the dynamics introduced by the charter school."

Another national, federally-funded study,

published in June 2001, concluded: "charter schools are helping public schools and districts to improve...school districts are changing their educational services and operations in response to the creation of charter schools in those districts—suggesting that competition can play a positive role in helping to improve all public schools."

Charters are encouraging more attention to accountability for all Minnesota public schools. Lots of questions are being asked about charter schools. A few charters have not done well, and some people would re-regulate them into oblivion. Some organizations have fought hard for 15 years against giving families choice among public schools. They are also nervous about charter schools where teachers can be on the school board, helping to set salaries and working conditions.

Most new ideas need refinement. Think about how airplanes or TVs have changed. But we have learned, and gained, by giving entrepreneurs a chance to carry out their dreams, as long as they are responsible for the results. Combine opportunity, responsibility and controlled competition: That's the charter idea. It makes sense in business, government, and education. **MJ**

Joe Nathan directs the Center for School Change at the University of Minnesota's Humphrey Institute. The Center operates Minnesota's Charter Resource Center. For more info, see www.centerforschoolchange.org, or www.mncharterschools.org.

Insurance for Behavioral Health Care

Public health experts contend that there are significant unmet needs for mental health and chemical dependency services... The U.S. Surgeon General concluded that most people in the nation with behavioral health disorders do not receive treatment... The Surgeon General, using a broad definition of mental illness, recently estimated that 28 percent of Americans have a mental or addictive disorder in a one year period, of which only one-third receive behavioral health care.

There is also evidence that many people who do not have mental or addictive disorders receive behavioral health care... The Surgeon General estimated that nearly half of the people who receive behavioral health services in a year did not have a diagnosable mental or addictive disorder during that year.

The number of people with mental disorders in Minnesota's state hospitals fell from 10,000 in the 1950s to 800 in October 1999, (according to a Program Evaluation Report of the Office of the Legislative Auditor, February 2001). As institutional care

declined, the mental health care system evolved into a complex decentralized system.

Private and public insurance spending on behavioral health services in Minnesota has increased faster than inflation in recent years, largely because of the rapidly growing use of prescription drugs to treat depression and other mental health disorders... Collectively, state and local human service agencies and insurance companies spent about \$941 million on behavioral health in 1999... State and local human service agencies spent about \$641 million on behavioral health, or roughly two-thirds of the total spending... Between 1989 and 1999, public mental health spending went from \$298 million to \$475 million, an increase of 59 percent. During the same time period, Minnesota's population increased by 10 percent... After adjusting for inflation, chemical dependency public spending went from \$62.4 million in 1989 to \$70.2 million in 1999. This 13 percent spending increase is well below Minnesota's 65 percent increase in overall health care spending. **MJ**

OnBalance

Views From Around the State

Editorial writers across the state are driving their readers to distraction

With so many people on the road during the Labor Day holiday weekend, it's no surprise that safe driving messages echoed across Minnesota...

The **Mankato Free Press** (8/23) thinks distractions are the main concern for drivers currently. "No one can properly pay attention to the hazards and potential hazards on the highways while doing one, two or three other things. The facts bear out the dangers. In Minnesota last year, 'distracted driving' was listed as the leading contributor in 16,000 crashes. There were nearly 16,000 injuries and 152 deaths in those crashes."

Education is the answer to reducing traffic accidents, according to the **Red Wing Republican Eagle** (8/27). "Driver education may seem like an easy task, but take a moment to review your own driving habits. Do you allow the proper distance when following another vehicle? How often are you running late for a meeting, concentrating more on your upcoming presentation than on the road? Educating people about the rules of the road and proper conduct behind the wheel is imperative if we're to achieve any significant reduction in accidents."

"Let's teach our teen drivers good habits by setting a good example," argues the **Star Tribune** (8/22). "If we're talking on the phone while driving, why would our teens think they can't do the same? Good friends will understand if we want to limit the conversation somewhat while driving, and appreciate that we're focusing on the task of safely delivering ourselves and our passengers to our destination."

On the topic of making roads safer: "In 1999, 4,748 people nationwide were killed on rural, two-lane roads compared with 1,354 deaths on urban freeways. That's a fatality rate of 3.79 per 100 million miles traveled compared with 0.79 per 100 million miles urban freeways," reports the **St. Cloud Times** (8/21). "The GAO study found that urban expressways got \$80,900 in federal funds per lane mile in 1999, compared with

\$100 a mile for local roads. Lawmakers should work now to achieve a more equitable balance. Traffic engineers can take some interim steps to improve busy roads—such as widening and paving shoulders, building turn lanes and redesigning intersections..."

In the world of agriculture, the talk about the 2002 Farm Bill is less freedom but more support for farmers.

The **Mankato Free Press** (8/16) promotes conservation of land. "Some farm groups oppose including much increase in funding for conservation efforts in the farm bill, saying the funds should be aimed at helping farmers in a depressed agriculture economy. Indeed, helping family farmers is and should be the focus of the program—it not only aids farmers and the rural economy, but also subsidizes low food prices for consumers. But crop subsidies alone encourage overproduction, which depletes crop prices and leads to the use of fragile land. Including more conservation funding in the bill should be considered an obligation. Protecting waterways and groundwater from pollution and preserving land for wildlife is simply a requirement of good stewardship. Most farmers believe that. Congress should do its part to help in that stewardship."

"The basic problem is that farmers have little control over their costs—for fuel, seed fertilizer and other products—and have no control over the prices they receive for what they produce," reports the **Rochester Post-Bulletin** (8/25). "We believe that lawmakers are sincere in wanting to change the system, but we have seen no workable recommendations for helping farmers to overcome these difficulties. Because most farmers operate independently, they do not have the clout they might wield if they were able to bargain for sale of their crops as a group."

Big tobacco problem requires big solution. "It is most important to educate our youth of the health hazards associated with smoking..." But when education doesn't work,

The **Bemidji Pioneer** (8/21) offers a different recommendation. "A portion of the \$6.1 billion settlement has been earmarked for a state Health Department program called 'Target Market,' which is designed to reduce tobacco use by minors age 12 to 17. It hopes to spend \$25.2 million over the next four years. But seems like only a drop in the bucket, compared to the millions of dollars the tobacco industry seems ready to spend to recruit new smokers. Perhaps it is time to set the industry standards by law so that the intent of the settlement—curbing teen-age smoking—is reached."

The city of Rochester tried unsuccessfully to pass a smoking ban in restaurants to reduce secondhand smoke. In response to the ordinance's defeat the **Rochester Post-Bulletin** (8/8) argues, "This is no time to give up the fight for clean air in restaurants. A substantial number of restaurants—in Rochester and elsewhere—have voluntarily gone smoke-free without loss in patronage. That still leaves a significant number of restaurants that subject their employees and patrons to the dangers of secondhand smoke."

The University of Minnesota ranks 11th for top American research schools. What do we need to do to keep this ranking?

The **Duluth News Tribune** (8/24) believes there are two broad issues: "Acquiring scarce research talent. The reality is you have to offer talented people nationally competitive salaries and time to do research: If a university fails to recruit the top quantum physicists for its project, it will find itself disadvantaged on competing against the university that has those top physicists. Acquiring equipment for research work. Physics and chemistry departments require laboratory space and scientific instruments; humanities and social science departments require library resources. . . . For the 2003 session, Minnesota needs new leadership to revitalize the state's commitment to research, teaching and outreach in our flagship institution of public higher education." **MJ**

TakeNote

Policy Tidbits

September finds your editors scurrying around storing up policy acorns

Green Light for Red Light Runners?

Many other cities have reduced accidents and deaths with intensive use of so-called red light runner cameras at busy intersections. In Washington, D.C., for example, before 30 red light runner cameras were installed, drivers running red lights killed 16 pedestrians. In 2000, there were two deaths. Nationally, motorists who run red lights kill about 800 people annually and cameras have cut that death rate in half when they have been installed. In 2001 both Minnesota and Texas voted down legislation enabling red light cameras.—*Lyle Wray*

Census findings reported by the St. Paul Pioneer Press show that western Wisconsin experienced double-digit housing growth in the 1990s. The increase in housing units in the six counties closest to the Twin Cities ranged from 16 percent in Barron County to 33 percent in St. Croix County.

Coincidentally the Wisconsin Department of Revenue released their annual report of property values on the same day. Not only did the number of households in the area grow rapidly, but the residential property tax values in the six counties referenced by the Pioneer Press ranked in the top 18 in the state. Polk County, ranked fourth statewide, led the way among the six with an increase in property values of nearly 16 percent followed by Burnett (15.3%), St. Croix (14.3%), Barron (13.2%), Pierce (12.7%) and Dunn (12.2%). Statewide, residential property values in Wisconsin increased by an average of 9.4 percent. The state leaders were Bayfield (on Lake Superior) and Washburn (just west of the Hayward area) with increases of 18 percent for the year. Fifteen of the top 20 counties in terms of residential property values growth are within a two-hour drive of the Twin Cities. Maybe Minnesotans took the 1980s tourism slogan, "Escape to Wisconsin," too literally.—*Phil Jenni*

While we're talking about Wisconsin.

Half of the top 20 Wisconsin counties ranked by property value had labor participation rates "significantly below statewide level" (less than 70 percent). They are largely counties in the northwestern part of Wisconsin, an area noted for recreational and seasonal properties for people from the

Twin Cities and for retirees. By and large, these people do not see themselves consuming lots of services that come from the property tax, but their property taxes are going to go up at a faster rate than the rest of the state. Is Wisconsin headed for a property tax revolt led by vacation and retiree homeowners? —*P.J.*

We're number 2! According to a new survey, Minneapolis is one of the best places in America for Generation X'ers. "Hot Jobs-Cool Communities" is a survey of America's "coolest places to live and work" for people aged 20 to 40. The survey is online at www.keeptoyoungtalent.com. It's the first survey to place equal value on work and life balance by measuring 43 variables, including crime, commute times, farmers' markets, clubs and musicians. Minneapolis ranked second on the list, right behind San Francisco. Seattle ranked third, followed by Boston and Denver. Rounding out the top 10: Portland, OR, Washington, D.C., Austin, Chicago and Milwaukee. The presence of only two east coast cities suggests that Horace Greeley's advice still rings true.—*P.J.*

Getting to Work. Seventy-six percent of Americans 16 years of age or older drive to work alone, according to a report in USA Today (Aug. 22, 2001). Eleven percent car pool, 5 percent take public transit or work at home, and 3 percent walk. Makes you wonder how much we could get done with 600 million dollars in incentives to work at home as an alternative to peak hour commuting, instead of building LRT. —*L.W.*

Not Good Enough on School

Completion. The state's fifth school completion rate study, released August 30, 2001, shows that 78.5 percent of the class of 2000 graduated on time. Although there were slight improvements in the four-year completion rates for Native American and Caucasian students, more African American students dropped out (37.4%) than finished in four years (37%). Although the two core districts are "working on it", losing 7,015 students per year from high school—mostly in the two core city districts—should not be acceptable. Judging from the second section, last inside page placement of the story in the *Star Tribune* (Aug. 31, 2001) more public outcry is needed on school completion rates. (View the full report at www.cfl.state.mn.us/datactr/compstu/compstu1.htm).—*L.W.*

As college students begin classes in Minnesota this fall, they may look south to North Carolina and find Minnesota getting beaten at more than just basketball. For example, all 100 counties in North Carolina recently approved a \$3.6 billion bond issue to support higher education. "There has always been the highest regard for higher education," according to the President of the Research Triangle Park Foundation, which links companies to research at Duke, N.C. State, and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The universities are magnets that attract business clusters and industries into the research park and throughout region.—*Michael Raja*

"Take Note" contributors include Minnesota Journal and Citizens League staff members.

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

PERIODICALS
POSTAGE PAID
AT MINNEAPOLIS
MINNESOTA

Welcome**New and returning members**

Greg Backlund
 Julie Binko
 Evelyn Boddy
 Lorraine Cannon
 Mathew Graham
 George Gribble
 Noah Heller
 William Hempel
 James A. Howard
 Aaron Mowrey
 Al Oertwig
 Kaye Rakow
 retchen Sabel
 Cindy Toppin
 Ron Wirtz
 Judy Woodward

CITIZENS LEAGUE

708 South 3rd St. Suite 500
 Minneapolis, MN 55415
 612-338-0791 Fax 612-337-5919
www.citizensleague.net

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.

The Citizens League is an open membership organization. Suggested dues are \$50 for individuals and \$75 for families. For more information, please call 612-338-0791.

Mind-Opener meetings kick-off new season

Throughout much of the year 2000, academics, business people, and civic leaders worried about the future of Minnesota in the new economy. In several well-known reports, Minnesota received mixed reviews as a location for high technology business.

Economic indicators suggested the Minnesota economy was strong, but many feared the state was not doing enough to remain competitive in the long run. The debate reached its peak in the fall of 2000 at the University Summit on Minnesota's Economy. Following the summit, a working group report provided a list of recommendations to enhance Minnesota as a location for high technology business.

In the aftermath of the internet boom, the debate has subsided and many ideas and recommendations have been placed aside or forgotten. This Citizens League Mind-Opener series provides a second look at where Minnesota stands as a high technology economy and our direction for the future.

**What's Up with Minnesota
In the New Economy?**

Tuesday, October 2, 2001

Ann Markusen

Professor

Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs



Tuesday, October 9, 2001

Randy Johnson

Hennepin County Commissioner
 Co-chair, Great North Alliance

Vance Opperman

Key Investments

Co-chair, Great North Alliance



Thursday, October 18, 2001

Michael Gorman

General Partner

Saint Paul Venture Capital



Tuesday, October 23, 2001

Rep. Dan McElroy (R-Burnsville)

Chair, House Jobs and Economic Development
 Finance Committee

7:30-8:30 a.m.

\$10 members; \$15 non-members
 (includes a continental breakfast)

**The Nicollet Island Inn
 95 Merriam, Minneapolis**

The Citizens League began regular policy breakfast meetings in 1962. The Mind-Opener forums, created in 1987 continue that tradition and have become one of the longest running public affairs forums in the country. If you are interested in learning more about issues that matter or want to exchange ideas with business, community and policy leaders, then we invite you to attend. And please bring a guest and introduce them to the Citizens League, too.

Getting the word out

Only Gary Condit and the State Fair got more news coverage than the Citizens League in August. The release of the school completion report (see the Executive Summary on page two of the *Journal*) and the election of Dave Durenberger garnered plenty of media attention.

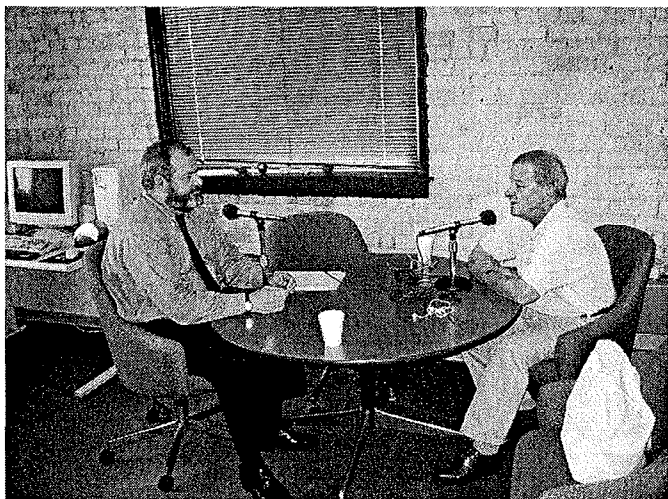
League president **Dave Durenberger** was Gary Eichten's guest on MPR's midday and League Executive Director Lyle Wray also appeared on the last regular show of Twin Cities Public Television's NewsNight. Both discussed Durenberger's election as president and the implications for the League.

But they turned out to just be the warm-up act for the release of the school completion report on August 20. The report was featured on the front page of the *Star Tribune* and the lead story of the *Pioneer Press*' local section. Both major dailies also wrote editorials about the report. Eric Eskola covered the release on WCCO radio. MPR news covered the story and co-chairs **George Latimer** and **Gary Cunningham** were interviewed on MPR.

It's not unusual for League study reports to be covered by print and radio journalists. But the school completion study also captured the attention of TV and web sites. The report was the lead story on Channel4000.com, the website for WCCO 4 News and was a "headline" story on KARE 11, KSTP Eyewitness News and KMSP TV.

Lyle Wray was interviewed by Curtis Beckman who does a syndicated radio show for 14 Minnesota radio stations. Wray also shared the report's recommendations with members of the United Way.

Community briefings have also begun. The League believes that the problem can't be fixed until there is widespread agreement that there is a problem. Getting the word out on the issue is the first step in that process.



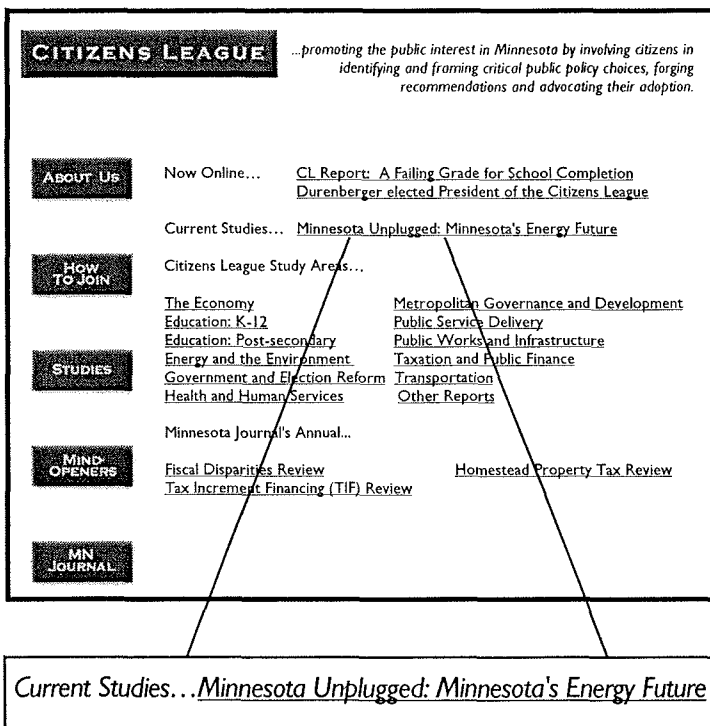
Lyle Wray and Curtis Beckman at the League office.

Energy committee off and running

After several meetings over the summer, the League Energy Committee has settled down to an every other week schedule. Led by co-chairs **Ken Keller**, director of the Center for Science, Technology and Public Affairs at the Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs, and **Andrew Brown**, partner at the Dorsey & Whitney law firm in Minneapolis, the committee expects to finish its work in late February.

League members and others interested in the Energy Committee can follow the committee's work at www.citizensleague.net (see below). The site will contain the minutes from previous meetings, articles and information related to the topic, and links to important websites produced by the government, non-profits and corporations with an interest in energy production and reliability.

Committee members also have their own discussion page; for the password or more information, please contact Scott McMahon at 612-338-0791 or smcmahon@citizensleague.net.



New stuff on the League web site

As you can see by the illustration above, the League has added more information on its web site. There are easy links to study committees, new reports and other new activities of the League. We've also added links on the front page to topic areas in which the League has worked over the last 20 years. A list of reports, summary positions and in the case of recent reports, a copy of the report is now readily accessible at www.citizensleague.net. Please stop in for a visit, or a discussion or just to read interesting material.