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Citizens League  
530 Syndicate Building  
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55402

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Statement by Citizens League at Metropolitan Council hearing on transportation plan proposals, August 24, 1972.

Last fall at a seminar on transportation conducted by the Metropolitan Council and the Metropolitan Transit Commission, we outlined several key ideas which had emerged from a year-long study we had conducted of transportation problems facing the Twin Cities region. We recommended:

1. The Metropolitan Council--as the area's general policy-making board-- should take the initiative and prepare by mid-1972 a guideline report for agencies developing plans for particular parts of the transportation system. We said this is key to obtaining action by the 1973 Legislature. The Council's guideline report, we said, should fully integrate the transit and auto-highway modes as part of the same transportation system.
2. A large part of the transportation guidelines must necessarily relate to roads. People cannot be left to believe that a transit system will eliminate the need for more freeways. Nevertheless, the ambitious freeway proposals of the highway planners within the 494-694 freeway ring cannot be tolerated.
3. Aggressive steps should be taken to build patronage and demand for the transit system. Simply the physical construction of a transit system will not be enough.
4. Major physical improvements should be made in the transit system immediately. But the question of new transit vehicle systems needs a fuller and broader discussion than it has had to date.

We have reviewed the Metropolitan Council's transportation plan proposals which have been submitted for hearing tonight in light of our earlier recommendations. Our conclusions:

1. Consistent with our first recommendation above, the Metropolitan Council has taken the initiative and has submitted a report which fully integrates the transit and highway components. We are not fully knowledgeable about what is taking place in other parts of this country, but we doubt whether any other regional general purpose organization has come to grips with the real transportation issues as the Metropolitan Council has here. Only the Council--neither the Minnesota Highway Department nor the Metropolitan Transit Commission--can take account of all problems of mobility and congestion in all parts of the region affecting all kinds of transportation facilities. The Council could have chosen to let the Highway Department and the Transit Commission each propose competitive systems without regard to the impact one has on the other. While this might have kept the Metropolitan Council out of possible controversy, the Council would have defaulted in an area where its leadership is critical. The general welfare of the region would have suffered much as a department store would if an architect permitted the elevator manufacturers and the escalator manufacturers both to build their own systems, trying to attract passengers, without regard to the service the other was providing.

2. With respect to the highway component of the Council's guideline report, it recommends a 52-mile reduction in freeway mileage within the 494-694 beltline, which is substantially below the miles originally advanced by the highway planners.

Only the present "committed" system ought to proceed to completion within the belt-line. At the same time the Council did not ignore, though it could have done so, the fact that growth will continue to occur in the outlying areas of the region and that people there will have to be served with good transportation facilities. Thus, the Council does see some additional freeways necessary on the outlying areas where development has not yet occurred.

3. During the period it was preparing its guideline report, the Metropolitan Council frequently addressed itself to the matter of building transit usage, not just building transit facilities. We placed heavy emphasis in our report on this question. We believe a transit system cannot attract riders simply because it happens to be available. Incentives are needed, such as a policy on parking costs of the automobile. This sort of "software" approach, we believe, is an urgent item of unfinished business which has not yet been addressed adequately.

4. The Metropolitan Council is urging immediate expansion and upgrading of bus service in the Twin Cities region. The Council believes a great deal of emphasis is needed here because present vehicles will carry 100% of the transit trips in the region at least for the next 8-10 years. In effect, improving bus service is the only way to improve transit in the next 8-10 years. It will take that long, even if a decision is made by the 1973 Legislature, for any new kind of vehicle to be operational. But the Council also urges prompt acquisition of right-of-way for exclusive use of transit vehicles, with buses to be running on the exclusive right-of-way <sup>as soon as possible,</sup> with any new-technology vehicle phased in when such a vehicle applicable to local needs is available. The Council believes the question of a new vehicle can remain open for a few years, but that this need not hold up development of buses on exclusive right-of-way. The Council's emphasis on upgrading bus service and maintaining flexibility in new technology matters is consistent with our recommendations.

Broad agreement on needed transit improvements is apparent between the Metropolitan Council and the Transit Commission on the critical issues of major improvements in bus service and on development of an exclusive right-of-way element in the overall transit system, with their differences limited to whether a decision on a new vehicle must be made now or be delayed.