CITIZENS LEAGUE STATEMENT

EFFECTIVE TRANSIT:

INVEST IN ACCESS TO JOBS AND SERVICES

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. OVERVIEW

This statement builds on the expansion of the definition of transit advanced in earlier Citizens League positions—transit being defined broadly as moving people by whatever means—to define transit within the context of access to jobs, services and other amenities that make up a livable community.

The key element in this expanded concept is developing an urban vision for livable communities that informs the development of transportation policies and infrastructure. Transit proponents have long argued that transit systems should be used as a means to cluster and densify development patterns.

This statement turns that argument around. The League argues that we cannot change the metropolitan area development patterns by transportation infrastructure alone; we should first create the vision of what the region should look like and then develop the flexible, efficient and cost-effective transportation options that fit that vision. In particular, it argues that we should articulate such a vision to increase access to jobs, services and amenities that we can afford as a region.

B. BACKGROUND

The focus of this statement is on the positive steps the region should take in moving forward to address our metropolitan citizens' important needs for access to jobs, services and amenities. Before discussing these steps, two prior Citizens League documents are summarized by way of background to the current Task Force report.

The Citizens League, in a full study committee report on transit in 1986, *New Destinations for Transit*, and in earlier reports, found that:

- Transit is not a vehicle. It is riding, rather than driving alone, whether in a bus, a van, a taxi or even in a car.

- To be used, transit must serve. It must respond to the dispersed travel patterns of the region's residents. It must recognize where people live and work. It must compete with the single occupancy vehicle. Large vehicles on inflexible routes, which require users to come to a fixed line, will not accomplish this.

- The regional transit authority should concentrate on increasing ridership—on getting drivers to ride—in order to reduce congestion and improve mobility. It should promote whatever vehicle best serves the trips that riders want to make.

In 1991, the Citizens League issued a statement in response to a proposal from the former Regional Transit Board for a one percent metropolitan-area sales tax to build a $1.6 billion light rail transit (LRT) system. The statement concluded, based on analysis of available information, that LRT:

- Would not attract a meaningful number of people from their automobiles;

- Would not relieve congested freeways;

- Would not alter the automobile and oil-dependent transport system in the metropolitan area;

- Would not significantly reduce the area's air pollution; and

- Would not carry significantly more passengers than were already riding buses.

The 1991 statement indicated that we need better transit in the metropolitan area. The League reaffirmed support for incentives such as carpooling programs, reserved busways and high-occupancy vehicle lanes to get people out of single occupancy vehicles.

In 1994, the Citizens League appointed a new task force to respond to several key questions:

- What are the most cost-effective ways to reduce impending congestion in the central corridor between Saint Paul and Minneapolis?

- Which actions should be pursued in the years immediately ahead, and why?

- How do these initiatives fit into the larger context of growing freeway congestion and our need to reduce the use of single-occupant vehicles?

II. ACCESS TO JOBS AND SERVICES: RETHINKING TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS

In discussing responses to the charge, the task force believed that it was not useful to repeat the work of the 1986 and 1991 League documents. It decided to move on to deeper issues of mobility and access in the context of pressing urban concerns that have emerged more forcefully in recent years. Some of these concerns include: perceived loss of community, increased global economic competitiveness, declining personal security and civility, rising income disparities, including rising poverty, and responsible parenting and child development.

The task force decided effective transit policy should be crafted within the broader context captured in this question:

- *How do we provide greater access to jobs and services and enhance the livability of our communities, in the context of a highly competitive national and global economy and in the face of mounting social problems and limited resources?*

A. ACCESS

The LRT debate often has been cast in terms of congestion in several transportation corridors rather than access to jobs and services across the metropolitan area. The task force considered the status of congestion in the corridor linking Minneapolis and Saint Paul and concluded it is not significant enough to warrant an immediate major transit investment at this time. Appendix II lists some of the elements leading to this conclusion.

People do not desire mobility as such; rather they demand access to social and economic interaction that mobility can provide. This perspective builds on the Citizens League view that transit should be broadly defined to include any form of traveling other than driving alone. In its transit studies, the League has focused on moving *people* and not on types of vehicles or technologies. In the task force work, this thinking has evolved to focus on improving *access* to jobs or services—which might or might not involve *mobility* through various forms of transportation.

When transportation planning is considered from the point of view of access, it becomes obvious that there are other strategies beyond major transportation infrastructure investments for providing access to jobs and services. For example, integrated land-use planning that mixes various types of uses and increases density of housing around and through major centers (including the downtowns) can make travel modes such as walking and bicycling realistic alternatives to cars and freeways. Walking downstairs from a mixed-use development to an office or shopping or a shop can provide access without requiring transportation. Innovations such as telecommuting —using telecommunications at home to work or access services—can eliminate entirely the need for transportation for some activities.

Considering transportation investments from the perspective of access also illuminates important equity concerns. For example, we need to evaluate and address the access of inner-city residents to growing job opportunities in the suburbs. Since many of the job seekers in the central cities cannot afford automobiles, targeting additional moneys to reverse commute programs could provide substantial benefits. More to the point, the opportunity cost of investing more than a billion dollars in major transportation infrastructure investments may preclude this and other important, but relatively low cost, strategies.

B. TRANSPORTATION AND LAND USE

Increasingly, we must view transportation and land use—the vision of what we want our urban area to be—as complementary components of our larger metropolitan system. Rather than just looking at automobile and mass transit, we need to look at enhancing accessibility to jobs and services by measures such as land-use planning and use of telecommunication technology.

Instead of taking present land-use patterns as a given and designing automobile or mass transit systems around them, we should consider how we want to change land-use patterns. Only then should we decide how to complement those land uses with a transportation system. Such measures as "in-fill" of downtown areas with mixed residential and business development and densification of arterial roads can significantly improve access to jobs and services—whether through direct access as a pedestrian or other transportation options.

Another approach is to finance road infrastructure through direct user charges, also known as road pricing. In contrast to changing land-use regulations and incentives, road pricing uses market mechanisms to shape urban transportation and land-use patterns based on individual users' willingness to pay.

Road pricing is based on a simple "user pays" principle: drivers pay directly (through electronic tolls) and fully for their use of publicly provided roads. Presently, roads are financed through a variety of taxes. Since drivers are not directly charged for their use of the roads, it should not be surprising that roads are overly crowded at certain popular locations and times of the day. In addition, the public costs resulting from air pollution and health effects of congestion are not readily apparent to the road user.

A "user pays" principle insures a more equitable and efficient system of road finance. When drivers are faced directly with the full costs of using congested corridors, other options such as van pooling, buses, telecommuting, flex-time (i.e., traveling at a non-peak time) become much more attractive. Also, corridors would not have to be continually rebuilt to meet the increased demand that occurs when we attempt to build our way out of congestion. Currently, our public funds fall way short of the immediate needs for maintaining and expanding the region's roads. New financing mechanisms need to be considered. Road pricing is one option that should be actively pursued.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

A. ENSURE THAT TRANSPORTATION INVESTMENTS COMPLEMENT PLANNING FOR LIVABLE COMMUNITIES

Recommendation 1: Transportation and transit programs and funding should be driven by and complement a "big picture" vision of livable communities for the metropolitan region. Until this vision is further developed and methods for implementing it are assured, we should not make further major transportation or transit infrastructure investments.

1. Vision for Livable Communities.

The Metropolitan Council, or another entity charged by the Legislature, should refine an overall plan or vision for livable communities in the region. The recent Metropolitan Council *Blueprint* does address, in varying levels of completeness, a number of elements that would make up such a vision. More work is needed both to elaborate this vision and to develop effective mechanisms to implement it. In carrying out this task, we need to incorporate state-of-the-art thinking on urban design.

Specific transportation elements should be a portion of this overall plan. The plan should look at ways to address the physical development of the region, its economic future, methods to revitalize our sense of community, how transportation investments can assist with this effort and what other steps, such as substantial land use controls, land acquisition and leaseback for development, will be needed before transportation investments can achieve their goals. We need to consider the needs and impacts on the central business districts and their surrounding inner city residential and commercial neighborhoods and the opportunities for increasing pedestrian, bicycle, carpool, vanpool and transit in the suburbs.

Such a vision will most likely need to address incentives for more compact communities. Recent studies have found a close correlation between the degree of travel and the density of a city. Per capita auto travel in U.S. cities is 2.2 times that of more densely populated European cities. On average a doubling of density results in a 30 percent reduction in per capita travel. Higher density development also opens up possibilities for walking and bicycling as alternative travel modes. A recent study in Portland, Oregon, found that improvements to the pedestrian environment can cut travel by as much as 10 percent.

Greater travel associated with lower density development means increased demand for roads and highways and other public infrastructure. These costs include: extra costs for infrastructure provision, additional energy consumption and air emissions, loss of wildlife habitat and prime farmland, and reduction of public spaces that nurture an active citizenry. It is more difficult to predict the savings of higher density development. However, one study examining the potential impact of high density development in five major Australian cities projected an 11 percent reduction in per capita gasoline use, a $2 billion dollar savings in avoided non transportation public infrastructure, and public savings of $.6 billion per year from reduced automobile accidents, smog and noise.

2. Moratorium on Major Transportation Investments.

There should be a moratorium on construction of all single occupancy vehicle (SOV) lanes and major transit related infrastructure within the fully built urban area until such a vision for livable metropolitan communities is completed.

In the fully built urban area, major transportation investments should not be made until there is an overall plan for the region that addresses the major issues of the 1990s and beyond, their transportation dimensions and the availability of resources to address all of these issues. This moratorium includes the construction of any additional SOV lanes on highways or arterial streets or the construction of any major transit facilities such as LRT.

Such a moratorium, put in place by the Metropolitan Council and the State of Minnesota, should preclude development of any additional capacity in the full pay transit financing district for the single occupant automobile. This should remain in force until completion of long-range plans that relate major transportation improvements to the resolution of major community issues and balance the resources required in all of these areas. While this moratorium is in effect, the State Legislature should require that any additional highway lanes and access required to serve new development in the remainder of our 11-county commuter area (outside the full-pay transit financing district) should be financed through development impact fees or other user pay models.

B. SHORT TERM ACTIONS TO IMPROVE ACCESS

Recommendation 2: Improve access to jobs and services through a number of relatively short-term actions. Investments should be made to encourage riding together or use of transportation substitutes rather than driving alone.

A number of short-term investments would assist in achieving this objective and are described below. (See Appendix I for a proposed budget implementing and testing some of these investments).

1. Vision For Transit.

Accelerate investment in some of the "Vision for Transit" elements proposed by the former Regional Transit Board. For example, develop several complete hubs in the suburbs with all of the necessary local collector and distribution "spokes" to better determine the viability of bus transit in serving the suburb-to-suburb market. The Metropolitan Council should seek appropriate funding for this action and we urge the Legislature to give favorable consideration to such a request.

2. Telecommuting.

Telecommuting is the use of personal computers and communication devices such as modems to make it possible to access jobs and services—working and shopping at home, for example. While telecommuting may reduce the volume of commuting movement, it might not limit scattered development.

We recommend that the Legislature promote additional telecommuting by removing or reducing the barriers to the use of this technology. Some of the barriers to telecommuting include worker compensation, liability and zoning laws. In the last session of the Minnesota Legislature, a law was passed that required that telecommuting be evaluated as an alternative to additional office space as part of planning of any new state office space.

The Metropolitan Council should explore how much to rely on telecommuting as a substitute for commuting trips as part of developing both the longer range urban vision and the longer range regional transportation plan.

3. Make Efficient Use of Existing Freeway Capacity.

The Minnesota Department of Transportation should expand metering of all freeway access ramps, develop additional high occupancy vehicle bypass ramps and expand electronic surveillance of the flow of traffic on these roadways. This would also involve expanding high occupancy vehicle (HOV) infrastructure investments. This might require seeking additional funds or shifting funding priorities.

4. Investigate Road Pricing.

At present, roads are financed through a combination of gas, property, and other taxes. Road pricing refers to charging travelers directly for use of roads or highways. Road pricing assures that transportation-related revenues pay the full costs of the transportation system including health and the environment.

Toll roads are designed to finance a specific facility, whereas the various road pricing policies mentioned above are an attempt to directly charge travelers for all the public costs they impose, including health and environmental impacts, and travel delays and productivity losses caused by their contribution to congestion. Toll roads are the most common form of road pricing but many other approaches exist. These include:

- Congestion pricing, in which travelers are charged a variable toll depending upon the route and time of day of travel;

- Mileage or emission based registration fees that charge users according to the damage they impose on the transportation infrastructure or natural environment;

- Charging the full cost for employee parking by requiring employers to offer employees the market value of their parking privileges to be used for transit or other alternatives; and

- High-occupancy toll lanes that allow single-vehicle drivers to buy their way onto HOV lanes, with revenues used to subsidize ventures such as reverse commuting.

Most strategies for reducing congestion have a high price tag but only minimal results. Road pricing, on the other hand, has resulted in significant reductions in congestion and in the use of single occupancy vehicles. As a result, the United States Department of Transportation and United States Environmental Protection Agency strongly encourage the use of road pricing by local governments to reduce congestion and meet air quality standards.

So long as road financing is not directly tied to some form of direct user fees, planning for future infrastructure will continue to be haphazard. Only by connecting future infrastructure investment decisions to users' willingness to pay can we insure an efficient investment.

The 1994 Legislature directed the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) and the Metropolitan Council to study the feasibility of road pricing. We support this initiative and encourage an actual demonstration of road pricing.

5. Provide Transit and Nonmotorized Use Incentives.

The Legislature and Metropolitan Council should explore increased incentives to developers, building managers and employers to insure that all new development can be connected by convenient transit and that all tenants and employees are provided with assistance in joining carpools or vanpools or using existing bus service. Also, bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure should be expanded. Low-cost investments include bicycle lanes, bicycle lockers and racks on buses.

6. Implement Additional Team Transit Steps.

The Metropolitan Council should implement additional Team Transit recommendations to facilitate transit viability by expanding shoulders and other bypasses at interchanges that facilitate the movement of buses, carpools and vanpools along roadways or onto freeway access ramps. Team Transit is a project begun by the Metropolitan Transit Commission (now Metropolitan Council Transit Organization) approximately three years ago to speed buses through congested areas. Through the cooperation of MnDOT, the Metropolitan Council and cities and counties, Team Transit has advanced ramp meter bypasses for HOV lanes on road shoulders and other techniques to decrease the travel time of buses.

7. Provide Parking Discounts.

Deep discount parking incentives for carpools and vanpools, in both municipal and private parking facilities in the central business districts and the University of Minnesota, should be expanded. This should include not only spaces in the perimeter ramps but those that are close to major work centers.

8. Restructure Taxi Regulation.

The Metropolitan Council should explore regional regulation of the taxicab industry to enable taxis to both pick up and drop off passengers in a central city and its surrounding suburbs and to assure adequate levels of service to areas with high levels of transit dependency. Additional taxi services, including shared-ride cab rates for unrelated customers and the use of vouchers to purchase cab service when regular route service is less cost-effective, should also be demonstrated. As part of this study, the Council should look at other forms of paid transit, such as jitneys, consisting of flexible-route van service to meet changing transportation needs.

9. Expand Reverse Commuting.

Develop additional capacity in with a variety of reverse-commuting strategies to effectively connect central-city residents to the growing suburban job market. Options might include: a number of substantial demonstrations utilizing the back haul time of regular route buses, such as is done with Southwest Transit; use of vanpools with volunteer or part time drivers; shared ride taxi services operated with vouchers provided by employer associations or training organizations.

10. Develop Additional Park-and-Ride Lots.

Develop additional and significant park-and-ride lots at the intersections of some major arterial roads with the freeways. They should be designed to provide quick transfer from drive-alone vehicles to bicycles, carpools, van-pools or buses in the suburbs.

11. Acquire High-Speed, High-Quality Buses.

High speed buses offer an attractive alternative to driving alone along important suburb-to-suburb commute routes. Coupled with HOV lanes and ramp bypasses, high-speed buses offers flexible, clean, fast and convenient service. They also provide a more timely response to meeting accessibility needs than other long term transit projects.

The quality of the bus system may also be improved with new developments in intelligent transportation systems that provide current information to bus riders on the estimated arrival time of a particular bus at their stop and system operators will make bus travel a more attractive option in the future.

We should make an investment in quality buses that are attractive and provide a smooth ride and reliable air-conditioning in the summer and heat in the winter. Buses will continue to be the major vehicles for the bulk of public transit trips in this region for the next 20 years, regardless of decisions made in the long-range plan about any other type of transit vehicle system.

Many of these shorter term improvements will require the cooperation of the Metropolitan Council, Minnesota Department of Transportation, cities, counties, building developers, building managers, employers and parking-lot operators. They should further build upon the conclusions of the transit productivity and service delivery studies the Metropolitan Council will be conducting in 1995.

C. RECOMMENDATION THREE: CHANGE TRANSPORTATION FUNDING

Recommendation 3: Transportation expenditures should be reviewed against a "big picture" for the region's development, while new methods for financing major long-term transportation needs are devised.

1. Base Major Transportation Spending on the "Big Picture."

The 1992 federal Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) gave Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) greatly increased powers to allocate funds among the various modes of transportation. This power has not yet been fully realized in the seven-county metropolitan area.

The Metropolitan Council, with assistance from the 30-member Transportation Advisory Board (TAB), should set priorities for all major transportation investments for the metropolitan area. This regional planning and allocation process of the Council and the TAB should be used to shape growth patterns and community development in accordance with the Council's *Blueprint* and with the further elaboration of a vision for livable communities called for in this statement.

To better rationalize and integrate transportation and transit funding, the railroad authorities of the seven metropolitan area counties should be eliminated. This authority, and all rights of way acquired by them that are not used for recreational purposes, should be transferred to the Metropolitan Council. This will allow more comprehensive and integrated planning across modes of transportation and better integration with current Council responsibilities for land-use planning. Responsibilities for transit planning and operations were moved to the Council by the Legislature in 1994. A similar shift of the railroad authority of the counties should occur in 1995.

2. Develop Alternative Financing Methods.

We need new ways of financing major long-range transportation investments. These methods should include:

a. Road Pricing to Pay for Major Transportation Improvements in Built-Up Areas.

Road pricing and congestion pricing should be two of the options considered not only for their contribution to revenues from user fees but their effect in encouraging use of alternatives to commuting by driving alone. It is important to note that road pricing could become a major source of funding both for new construction and for rebuilding of current transportation facilities.

We support the initiative passed by the 1994 Minnesota Legislature that directs the Minnesota Department of Transportation and the Metropolitan Council to study the feasibility of road pricing, and we encourage an actual demonstration of road pricing.

b. Full-Cost Pricing for Exurban Communities and Commuters.

Exurban commuters in the future should be expected to pay for all the highway improvements required to serve their commutes by the drive-alone auto. This includes paying for all improvements for access to major arterial and state highways and additional lane capacity needed to serve all new developments in this exurban area in the future. This can be done in different ways:

Required Set Asides. Require all local units of government with land-use authority to set aside parallel service roads to any multi-lane state trunk highways, whenever a local unit decides to issue new building permits or approve the platting of land for subdivision. (Local units may be counties, cities or townships in the nine counties in Minnesota and three counties in Wisconsin surrounding the seven-county metropolitan area.)

Development Transportation Fees. In addition, these local units should be required to charge new development transportation fees sufficient to finance all improvements needed to provide access and the additional lane capacity for new development in the next 20 years. To operate effectively, these local units will need to determine the amount of land subdivision and development that will occur and set the fees based on these estimates. As building permits are issued or subdivisions approved, the fees will need to be adjusted based on the estimated revenues needed to finance the improvements required for access and capacity. One possible technique for collecting such fees is a system of roadway or congestion pricing that imposes a fee on all vehicles operating within the exurban area during the workweek.

Sixteen states currently allow use of development impact fees to guide new development and finance related public infrastructure. The fees are used for a variety of purposes, including protecting ecologically sensitive areas (Broward County, Florida) and financing water, sewer and other public services (Texas, Florida and many other states). More recently, impact fees have been used to finance new roads and other transportation infrastructure (San Francisco and other California cities), and to minimize air emissions (San Joaquin County, California).

Impact fees can be tied to incentives, such as density bonuses, providing a "carrot-and-stick" approach to compact communities. Offsets to these fees might be made available to developers for creating transit-friendly developments or other design approaches to reduce transportation demand. Impact fees avoid inefficient public provision of infrastructure by tying development to the full costs of the public facilities required.

3. Focus on Short-Term Improvements and Demonstrations in 1995-96.

The Legislature should provide the needed resources to undertake the necessary short term improvements and demonstrations in the 1995-96 biennium pending the conclusion of a long range plan. It should hold off implementation of any new major source of transit or highway funding for improvements in the built-up urban portions of the seven-county metropolitan area until 1997-98, when the federal funding picture should become more clear and when a regional vision for livable communities is in place. In the meantime, funds to facilitate the development of shorter term improvements, incentives and demonstrations should become a priority for the federal ISTEA, state and local funds in the next few years.

4. Use Transportation Funding Principles.

If the Legislature decides to increase funds available for transportation in this session, whether to counteract a projected reduction of federal transit operating funds, to increase repair or maintenance of existing roads or, if needed, to maintain the present transit system and implement short-term demonstrations and improvements, it should consider funding alternatives that are consistent with the following principles:

a. No Dedicated Funding.

The Legislature should avoid dedicated funding or additions to existing dedicated. Instead, we recommend increasing the cost of gasoline by adding a sales tax to the highway gasoline tax and separately appropriating funds to both highways and transit.

b. No General Sales Tax Increase.

The Legislature should not add to the general sales tax of the seven-county metropolitan region at this time for the purpose of funding any transportation improvements, including major transit or major freeway expansions. It should, however, consider the use of this regional tax source in light of all regional issues and the resources that may be required to address them.

c. Short-Term Improvements Only at this Time.

Use of any new revenue from a sales tax on gasoline or any other new or increased tax designed to provide revenue for transportation should only be used for short-term improvements and demonstrations outlined above or to replace existing state appropriations or existing revenues from property taxes.

d. Regional Review.

Require that all significant highway or transit improvements, whether federally or state funded, be included in the review and approval process of the Metropolitan Council.

e. No Constitutional Dedication.

Constitutional dedication of gas tax should be recognized as an impediment to progress in intermodal transportation envisioned by ISTEA. To match the flexibility in transportation funding at the federal level, the constitutional dedication of gasoline tax should be eliminated.

f. User Pay Principle.

Although dedication of revenue is inappropriate, transportation-related revenue sources should pay the full costs of the transportation system so that users pay the full costs of roads. Equity concerns may be addressed through cross-subsidies among the elements in this system.

V. CONCLUSION

All major transportation improvements should be supportive of a fully articulated strategy for revitalizing the urban region and guiding its growth into the future.

Reconceptualizing transportation challenges as ***access*** opens up new avenues for meeting the needs of people for jobs and services. This includes strengthening the residential and mixed uses in the core of the region to reduce the need for mobility, and increasing access to jobs, services and amenities through telecommuting.

A "do nothing" approach to meeting the access needs of our metropolitan region is not acceptable. While we take the time to enhance both the vision and implementation of planning around our economic development, social and transportation systems in the seven-county area, there are a number of relatively low-cost ways to enhance access of citizens to jobs and services. We should take steps immediately to implement these strategies.

In the meantime, we need a moratorium on new single-occupancy vehicle lanes and major transit infrastructure construction within the fully developed area and we need to rethink the way in which we fund the transportation system.

APPENDIX I:

EFFECTIVE TRANSIT SAMPLE BUDGET

I. INTRODUCTION

The Task Force developed a sample budget for consideration by the Legislature of short-term actions to improve access to jobs and services in the metropolitan area. Although the development of a comprehensive strategy for access to jobs and services would fit within the purview of the Transportation Advisory Board, this budget is offered to illustrate the kinds of investments the task force believes could provide significant benefits in responding to the access needs of citizens in the region.

II. SAMPLE BUDGET

We propose spending $50 million to implement, test and evaluate a number of important transportation measures. Additional investments would need to be made to fully implement all of the short-term recommendations but the following budget includes highest priority items.

Sample Budget :

1.	**Vision for Transit: Implement hub system**	**$35 million**
2.	**Efficient use of freeway capacity including high occupancy vehicle (HOV) infrastructure investments**	**$8 million**
3.	**Telecommuting infrastructure and program support**	**$2 million**
4.	**Specialized transit for reverse commuters**	**$5 million**
	Total	**$50 million**

III. BUDGET DETAIL

A. *Vision for Transit* Hub System: $35 million

Implementation of the RTB *Vision for Transit* would result in faster and more convenient transit options, leading to increased ridership. Time savings are achieved through community circulators connected by timed transfers to other suburban hubs or to the central cities and by preferential treatments for HOVs. The vision also includes expanded peak-period express routes and transportation-demand management programs that specifically address highly congested corridors. Finally, the RTB vision addresses the growing problem of congestion resulting from the increase in suburb-to-suburb and nonwork trips.

The RTB vision is based on a variety of services to meet transit needs in the metropolitan area. The vision includes four key components: 1) enhancing transit service in the central cities and suburban areas through a hub and spoke as opposed to a radial system; 2) improved coordination of decentralized transit systems within the metro region; 3) performance evaluation to insure cost effective service; 4) increased variety of accessible transit options.

The hub-and-spoke transit configuration provides flexibility in meeting changing and unpredictable travel needs, making it a higher priority than a huge investment in LRT on a single corridor.

B. High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) Infrastructure Investments: $8 million.

Providing separate guideways and on-ramps and signal preemption for high occupancy vehicles is a proven technique for increasing vehicle occupancy rates and the efficiency of travel in urban corridors. The effectiveness of HOV strategies has been demonstrated nationally and in the seven-county metropolitan region. Houston, which has the most elaborate HOV system in the nation, *was the only major city to reduce congestion and increase transit ridership during the 1980s*. Similarly, in our seven county metropolitan area, I-394, with its HOV lanes, is the only freeway entering downtown Minneapolis in which vehicle-occupancy rates have increased since 1985.

While an HOV lane or busway may be appropriate for the central corridor in the future (in fact, the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for LRT found that a busway achieves similar benefits as LRT at a far lower cost), we recommend lower cost investments such as ramp meter bypasses, signal preemption, additional park-and-ride lots and financial incentives to those who carpool.

In a highway corridor that is metered to minimize congestion, a sizable percentage of the commute time occurs while queuing up at the ramp meter. Because of this, bypasses for HOVs present a travel time and reliability advantage for those who choose to carpool or ride buses, at a far lower cost than an HOV lane.

Four of the 18 ramps on the I-94 corridor already have such ramp bypasses. We recommend the installation of ramp bypasses on the remaining 14 ramps within the corridor and other major feeder routes. The cost for 20 bypasses at $250,000 each would be a total of $2 million.

C. Telecommuting Infrastructure and Program Support: $2 million.

Telecommuting can be a transportation substitute. The private sector is making large investments in new telecommunications systems. Now is the time for public-sector investments to leverage public goals such as air quality improvements, increased economic competitiveness, increased access to jobs and services and improved quality of life. A critical low or no-cost strategy involves removing existing disincentives or barriers to telecommuting such as changes in worker compensation, liability and zoning laws.

We also recommend the following: 1) a publicly funded telecommunications demonstration project to better understand the potential of telecommunications to displace traditional trip making; 2) incentives for the installation of higher capacity telephone service; 3) addition of community broad-band capacity to the area; 4) market research to establish a baseline of existing telecommuting and to develop specific actions to encourage increased telecommuting; 5) development of a telecommuting strategy that builds on the synergy between home-based workers, telecommuters, telework centers and community support centers.

D. Specialized Transit Services for Reverse Commuters: $5 Million.

There are estimated to be approximately 5,000 people in Minneapolis alone who are excluded from jobs because of limited access. The proposal would use vouchers, private market paratransit and the creation of care cooperatives to provide travel to jobs located outside of the central cities.

APPENDIX II:

CONGESTION IN THE CENTRAL CORRIDOR

Congestion that slows the movement of people to and from jobs or services and access to job centers is a growing concern in the metropolitan area. However, the region has experienced an unprecedented increase in mobility in the past three decades with the expansion of the freeway system and a dramatic rise in the number of automobiles and the total miles driven. This has enabled people to live farther away but spend the same amount of time commuting.

Congestion in the central corridor between the central business districts of Minneapolis and Saint Paul is not significant enough to warrant an immediate major transit investment. Congestion in our central area has not reached the level of most major U.S. cities and is not likely to do so. This is not to suggest that the problem will take care of itself or that nothing should be done, but that we should look at the total transportation picture and make affordable investments accordingly.

- Congestion is a fairly localized phenomenon in the region both in its specific location and time of day and day of the week. It is not on a scale that appears to threaten the economic viability of the region when compared with other areas in this country or with global competitors. However, it may increase the economic attractiveness of some parts of the region compared with others. Congestion in the central areas of the region, especially between the two downtowns, however, does not appear to threaten the economic health of either downtown.

- The central corridor already has two of the most successful bus lines in the region. We should build on this success by encouraging additional bus and carpool ridership. Before we develop a transit line with substantially greater capacity than the region is likely to utilize effectively in the next several decades, we should expand bus capacity and make efforts to encourage carpool and bus ridership.

- Congestion is likely to increase more quickly in many suburban locations, where the bulk of new job growth is occurring, or in the areas between these new jobs and suburban housing than in the central cities which are experiencing only limited growth.

- The central cities instead need investment to attract residents from throughout the region to entertainment, shopping and other activities in the central business district, rather that a substantial investment in additional access to the downtowns. They might also need investments to make abandoned industrial sites attractive for development or to facilitate the conversion of some areas from housing to job activities or vice versa.

- "Limits on access to jobs and services" may be a more useful framing of the challenge than "congestion."

APPENDIX III:

WORK OF THE TASK FORCE

In 1994, the Citizens League Board of Directors charged the Effective Transit Task Force with answering three questions:

- What are the most cost-effective ways to reduce impending congestion in the central corridor between Saint Paul and Minneapolis?

- Which actions should be pursued in the years immediately ahead and why?

- How do these initiatives fit into the larger context of growing freeway congestion and our need to implement strategies that reduce the use of single-occupant vehicles?

The Task Force was co-chaired by Jim Newland and A. Scheffer Lang. The other members were Oliver Byrum, Sharon Decker, Gary DeCramer, Sally Evert, Jody Hauer, William Lahr, David Morris, David Rodbourne, John Sanger, Clarence Shallbetter, Kenneth Stabler, Dirk DeVries and Donn Wiski.

The task force met mainly on a weekly basis between October 1994 and January 1995.

Staffing to the task force was provided by Heather Peterson, Dave Van Hattum and Lyle Wray.

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WHAT THE CITIZENS LEAGUE IS

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 has been an active and effective public affairs research and education organization in the Twin Cities metropolitan area for more than 40 years.

Volunteer research committees of League members study policy issues in depth and develop informational reports that propose specific workable solutions to public issues. Recommendations in these reports often become law. Over the years, League reports have been a reliable source of information for governmental officials, community leaders, and citizens concerned with public policy issues of our area.

The League depends upon the support of individual members and contributions from businesses, foundations, and other organizations throughout the metropolitan area. *For membership information, please call 612/338-0791.*