



Approved Minutes Met Council Task Force

Thursday, October 15, 4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.
Amherst H. Wilder Foundation, Room Auditorium C&D
451 Lexington Parkway North - Saint Paul, MN 55104

Members present: John Adams, John Knapp (**Co-chair**), Steve Dornfeld, Acooa Ellis, Jim Erkel, Carol Flynn, Michele Foster, Peter Bell, Sharon Sayles-Belton, Scott Neal, Elizabeth Kautz, Chris Gerlach, Bill Hargis, Dan McElroy, Ravi Norman, and Shannon Watson

Members not present: Susan Arntz (**Co-chair**), Adeel Lari, and Jim Solem

Staff & staff support present: Pahoua Yang Hoffman, Sean Kershaw, and Ellen Watters

Citizens League members and special guests present: Bright Dornblaser, Kevin Terrell, Kate Weyenberg, and Gabriel Flaa.

Proposed outcomes for meeting

- Approve minutes from previous meeting.
- Approve revised agenda.
- Debrief previous meeting
- Review strategic process chart.
- Discuss critical questions and come to consensus on priority areas.
- Agree on next steps.
- Evaluate meeting.

Minutes

Co-Chair John Knapp called the meeting to order at 4:06 p.m.

1. **Welcome, Introductions, Approval of Minutes and Agenda, Debrief of Previous Meeting**

Introductions

Co-chair John Knapp started the meeting by introducing two student interns: Kate Weyenberg and Gabriel Flaa from the University of St. Thomas who will work under Pahoua Hoffman on the Met Council project.

Approval of Minutes

Co-chair Knapp asked if there were any questions or feedback on the minutes from the October 1st meeting. A member raised a concern that the two sentences at the end of the first paragraph on page 4 of the minutes were inaccurate. Co-chair Knapp suggested that these two sentences be struck from the minutes. Member Bill Hargis moved to approve the minutes with the deletion of the last two sentences from the first paragraph on page 4 of the minutes. Jim Erkel seconded the motion. A unanimous verbal 16-0 aye vote passed the motion to approve the minutes with the deletion of the two sentences on page 4.

Approval of Revised Agenda

Co-chair Knapp asked the group if there were any questions or additions concerning the revised agenda that was sent out the day before. Hearing none, Co-chair Knapp asked for approval of the revised agenda. The revised agenda was approved by a unanimous verbal 16-0 aye vote.

Debrief of Previous Meeting

As usual, time was set aside to debrief the previous meeting. Co-chair Knapp informed the group that he had received comments after the meeting from two members, including one that sent a memo to the Task Force group. The member who sent the memo expressed that he did not feel there was enough time allotted to go through the statutory basis for the Council, which led him to draft the memo. He distributed hard copies of his memo and the corresponding chart that was sent by email. Another member provided feedback on special guest Pat Born's opinions on what the Task Force should and should not focus on, indicating that some of Born's comments seemed counter to what the group is charged to do, which is to come up with an appropriate framework to review the various concerns that have been raised: structure, governance, and/or specific issues in order to come up with recommendations to address them. The member felt some of Born's comments were too limited. Another member chimed in that while he did not disagree, he felt the time allotted to Born was appropriate and could be a model for future presenters.

2. Review Strategic Process Chart

Co-chair Knapp explained that the purpose the meeting today was to flesh out some critical questions by drawing on the commentary the group has heard in order to begin to prioritize areas for the Task Force to focus on and consider guests to bring in to provide additional testimony. To accomplish the task today, co-chair Knapp called on Sean Kershaw to address the group. Kershaw explained that because the work of the Task Force is so big and important and the timeline so compressed, the Citizens League had envisioned all along to bring on more support to assist the Task Force and the small Citizens League staff. Dowell Management is the firm the Citizens League has retained and individuals from Dowell Management have been present at all previous meetings. Kershaw re-introduced Ellen Watters who was at the first meeting on September 25 and he explained that today, she will moderate the critical questions discussion so that co-chair Knapp can also be a full participant. In the future, Watters may also be joined by Larry Dowell.

Watters walked through the strategic process chart and explained that the schematic represents a roadmap for the Task Force. She thanked the Task Force for their patience during the last two meetings listening to and learning from outside speakers who laid the historical foundation and presented statutory information. While the group will not try to answer the critical questions during this meeting, she explained that by narrowing and prioritizing them today, this will help the group focus in on certain areas and create pathways for the group to go down towards setting final recommendations. The agreed-upon critical questions will also help the group determine other outside individuals to invite to provide additional information. It may also help instruct staff to conduct additional research. Co-chair Knapp informed the group that the critical questions that were sent ahead should not be viewed as an exhaustive list but as a starting place for discussion. Watters asked Pahoua Hoffman to explain how the critical questions were compiled. Hoffman explained that the critical questions were collected as-is from minutes of recent meetings, speaker notes, reports from the Citizens League, legislative reports, and reports from other groups. She added that an initial list of questions was also shared with some outside stakeholders for their feedback to ensure that various viewpoints were represented. Lastly, Hoffman explained that she grouped the 31 questions into five categories: role & purpose, governance & structure, scope & authority, issues specific, and other.

3. Discussion of Critical Questions [See list of questions attached.]

Watters noted that while the list is a good one, the Task Force needed to narrow down the list to a more manageable 6-8 if possible. To work as efficiently as possible, she suggested that the group start first with governance and structure, testing her theory that some of the questions under this category are by-products of another decision and could perhaps be collapsed.

A member made the comment that questions 1, 7, and 8 are so closely linked that it would be difficult to separate them. Another member countered it was her hope that the Task Force *would* discuss question 1 separate from the politics of 7 and 8. Related to how members should be selected (question 8); a member reminded the group that one of the guiding principles for the Task Force is that the recommendations be politically plausible and implementable. Another member agreed 1, 7,

and 8 were questions to keep, but posited that 7 was the key one because depending who or what it is representing, it will reveal different pathways.

Another member said she did not view this group's work as starting over by questioning the purpose of the Council. What she'd like the group to focus on are questions that get to a rationale for change. Co-chair Knapp reminded the group that the Task Force's draft charge states that as a starting place, the Task Force will continue to support the existence of the Met Council as a regional governmental agency with regional authority, so the group should not question whether it should exist. The question he'd like to focus on is whether the current structure inhibits the Council's effectiveness and if yes, would another structure make the Council more effective. Another member agreed we should see the existence of the Council as a given and focus on what is and isn't working and identify the need for change.

Another member questioned how you can determine what is or isn't effective if there isn't a shared vision, which goes back to question 1 about purpose and mission. She added that from her recollection of Deb Dyson's presentation of the statutes, she did not see a mission being described.

A member proposed a "10,000 foot" mission statement to guide the discussion: *To plan for and operate regional public infrastructure*. He added that the group can and should argue what "regional" means, the group can and should argue what the meaning of infrastructure should be, and that the group can and should argue what things should be planned for and operated. He saw all these things as worthy to argue about and from here, debate the questions. Watters thanked the member for his proposed mission statement but directed the group to the questions at hand. In response to an earlier statement about mission, a member commented that the charge of the Met Council is in statute as: *The Met Council shall prepare and adopt...and prescribe guides for the orderly and economical development, public and private, of the metropolitan area*. The group agreed to keep questions 1, 7, and 8.

A member added that question 4 is an important one to discuss further: how to balance the immediate interest of the present versus the future since decision made will cascade into the future. Someone added that it is part of the mission question.

Question 10: does the Met Council have appropriate measures that hold it accountable was another question suggested to keep for further discussion.

Question 9 was suggested to be set aside but another member asked if it could be added to question 8: how should members be selected and what should their terms of office be. It was agreed that question 9 would be combined with question 8.

After a brief discussion, it was agreed that question 5 is subsumed in question 14. It was further added that questions 5 and 14 could be subsumed under question 1, but it was agreed to keep 5 and 14 together, separate from 1 - keeping mission separate from powers for the time being.

A suggestion was made to set aside question 13: what geographic area should be covered and how should the Council grow beyond its footprint but several members disagreed and argued to keep it in. Another member raised a previous point that if the Met Council's charge is to plan for the orderly and economical development of the metropolitan area, we have to discuss what that metropolitan area ought to be. Related to the charge of the Council, a member commented that concerns have been raised because some of the Council's activities today do not align with it. An example was the operating of the green line. Another member commented that maybe there could be a mechanism to promote greater cooperation with adjacent counties, so it need not be just about defining or redefining jurisdiction but some kind of alternative solution.

A member suggested and all agreed to add "state agencies" to question 6.

Under the Issues Specific category, there was general agreement that many of the transportation related questions were similar but phrased differently. There was a discussion that many of these were transit specific but they should be broader to include roads and other infrastructure. A member noted that part of the difficulty here is that “one part is part of another part” so they need to be planned accordingly and with the overall infrastructure in mind.

Another member cautioned that as we talk about roads and bridges, we need to understand that there needs to be close collaboration with MN DOT, who also knows where the roads are needed. There are different jurisdictions: city roads, county roads, and state roads. We have to be careful here because there are state agencies that have authority and the law states this very clearly.

There was a discussion of question 20 and 21 that focuses on the funding and coordination. It was suggested that 21 be eliminated but the wording be changed in question 20 to now start with: “How should the authority...” and adding in the word “coordinating” so that the question is restated to ask: “*How should the authority for governance, coordinating, planning, management, operations, and funding of transportation (including transit systems) in the Twin Cities region be distributed among state and local governments?* [It was later suggested to replace the word “transit” in question 20 with “transportation.”]

A suggestion was made to keep question 24: how the Met Council coordinates with stakeholders to prioritize transit ways. Another member commented that currently, the questions are focused on transit and transit ways and suggested that we look at this more broadly as “transportation.” Given this agreement, a suggestion was made and accepted to replace the word “transit” with “transportation” in both questions 20 and 24.

An amendment was suggested for question 28: “*If market demands and existing subsidies support people’s preferences about where to live and how to get around, what is the role of the Council’s housing- and transit-related prescriptions?*” It was explained that market forces have a huge impact in this area. Should the question be: “*How should the Council give consideration to market forces and existing subsidies in its planning and operational activities?*” Another member agreed and provided examples of how local budgets are balanced and how market forces drive development. Another member suggested that “re-development” be added to question 28 so that it includes development and re-development. A member cautioned that zoning is now a local authority and within the local domain and that we should be careful not to disrupt this. A member had concerns with the term “preferences” since many people do not have their preferences acknowledged. It was also noted that market forces affect different people differently and that we need to be mindful of this. A comment was also made that the word “considers” was preferred over “accommodate” as it relates to market forces. A member also mentioned that we should not be naive about what the market is and provided an example that if an area is zoned for single family homes and are what is available, how much of this is affected by market forces? It is affected by various decisions made not just market forces.

A suggestion was made to set aside question 29 concerning climate change, but a member disagreed, arguing that if transportation and the development we put on the land results in certain kinds of climate effects or if the effects of climate change affect these developments, it does, in their opinion, fall under the charge of the Met Council.

Members discussed question 30: should the Met Council plan for economic competitiveness. Several members did not think it should be planned for but that it is a byproduct of a well-functioning Met Council and that it is not a goal in and of itself. The group leaned towards setting aside this question.

Question 26 was discussed and it was agreed that water is both a state issue and a metro issue. A member provided an example of 10 years-worth of work cleaning up the watershed in the metro. Like the amendments before, it was suggested that the question be rephrased from “are” to “should” to now ask: “*What should the Met Council’s powers be over surface and groundwater interaction, and over drinking water – both supply and quality?*” There was also comments made about how many water-related agencies there are and at the municipal level, to drill a well, one has to go to three

agencies at the state: Health, DNR, and Pollution Control. It was said that the same was true for private developers.

Question 25 concerning Met Council's authority over housing was discussed. Members commented that a housing policy plan is in statute. The question was how housing relates to everything else the Council does. A member questioned whether this was a bridge too far - can housing be centrally determined and will this work? He felt it was better left to local municipalities to decide but we should be mindful of exclusionary zoning. Some members did not think this was possible. Some felt the Met Council should just build the environment and not dictate the housing stock. A suggestion was made to delete the second half of the question. After some discussion, it was agreed to keep question 25 but rephrase it to ask: "*What should the Met Council's authority be over housing?*" This should also include affordable housing.

A member commented that as we look at the final questions, we should not start from the assumption that these things are broken, adding that for most, it is not perfect but closer to right. It was added that asking outside individuals to come before the Task Force after this exercise is part of finding out what is working and what isn't. Wastewater was given as an example of a major part of the Met Council's work that is working.

Watters asked if there were other questions not on the list that the group might consider.

- The Met Council's role in planning for *and* operating transportation. There are concerns being raised about the Met Council distributing transportation funding and being an operator, therefore also seen as a competitor by also operating. Whether just perceived or real, this is a concern.
- MPO status. A member explained that this is a grey area and is currently being questioned at the Federal level. Some think it has been settled, some do not feel that it has. Others commented that we do not want to mess too much with the MPO, which may disrupt other areas that are working. Another asked whether this is it a question for the group to determine since it will likely be determined by the Feds. It was added that the U.S. Department of Transportation does review MPO certification every two years and the current arrangement has passed each year.
- Aviation. Should it continue to be under the Met Council's purview?
- Sports facilities. They are regional assets and they require huge amounts of funding to build and maintain. Given the different commissions representing various sports, the complexity of funding these facilities, this may be a topic worth reviewing.

Questions 1, 4, 5 (to be under 14), 6, 7, 8, 9 (to be added to 8), 10, 13, 14, 20 (as amended above), 24 (as amended), 25, 26, 28 (as amended), and 29 were kept to discuss further.

Questions 2, 3, 11, 12, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 21, 22, 23, 27, 30, and 31 were agreed to be set aside. Watters added that this does not mean we can't bring these back at some later point.

Watters concluded the discussion by stating that staff will work to better word the questions and amend them according to today's discussion. Sean Kershaw commented that although there is a "no live tweeting" rule while in the meetings, he encouraged members to talk to their peers outside of the meetings to get their opinions and perspective. He wanted members to know that they should be open to sharing what is discussed here.

4. Next Steps & Evaluation

Co-chair Knapp went through the next four meeting dates asking members to raise hands if they were not able to attend meetings. Based on the hand votes, the meeting schedule will stand as published since the majority of members will be able to attend.

After Co-chair Knapp explained the Citizens League meeting evaluation process of evaluating the meeting on a scale of 1-5, 1 being poor and 5 being exceptional, the members evaluated the meeting as follows: 4, 4, 5, 4, 4, 5, 4, 4, 5, 5, 4.32, 5, 4.5, 5, 4.5, 4. Average 4.46.

5. Adjourn

Co-Chair John Knapp adjourned the meeting at 6:03 p.m.

Met Council Task Force - Critical Questions

The following questions were taken from recent Task Force discussions, Task Force meeting notes, Citizens League reports, legislative reports, think tank reports, and conversations with individuals. They are listed in no particular order. [*These questions were discussed at the Met Council Task Force meeting on October 15, 2015.*]

ROLE & PURPOSE

1. What is the purpose and mission? Why a Met Council and what should it do?
2. When the Met Council was created, it had a clear mandate – what is it today? What is it for the future? How is this to be determined?
3. Are the Met Council’s mission and powers appropriately matched with its accountability to the citizens of the metro area?
4. How do you balance the immediate interest of the present vs. future? Interest of the local vs regional?
5. Does the Met Council perform tasks already carried out by other government agencies, or tasks that other agencies should perform?
6. What should the relationship of local governments and the Met Council be in setting policies for the region? What is the appropriate balance between regional planning and efficiency and local control?

GOVERNANCE & STRUCTURE

7. Who or what should the Council be representing? Units of local government? Citizens?
8. How should its members be selected?
9. How should terms of Met Council members be determined?
10. Do the mission and powers of the Met Council have the appropriate measures that hold it accountable? And to whom should they be accountable?
11. Should there be a standing legislative committee (different than the Legislative Commission on Metropolitan Government) with a focus on overall metropolitan concerns?
12. How do other metro areas around the country accomplish regional planning? What are the advantages and disadvantages of each model?

SCOPE & AUTHORITY

13. What geographic area should be covered? Should it still be just the seven counties or should it be nine or a hybrid? If and how should the Council grow beyond its footprint?
14. Should the Task Force focus on powers of the Met Council? For example, should certain entities and policy areas be—or continue to be—under the Council’s jurisdiction?
15. Can the Legislative Commission on Metropolitan Government (LCMC) operate more effectively in carrying out its statutory role of oversight of the Met Council?
16. Has the legislature created enough check and balances related to the Council’s powers?
17. What should be the Met Council’s relationship with non-profits in the Twin Cities region?

ISSUE SPECIFIC

18. How can the governance of transportation be improved and/or simplified?
19. What does not work well with the existing transit governance system in the Twin Cities region?
20. How is authority for governance, planning, management, operations, and funding of transit systems in the Twin Cities region distributed among state and local governments?
21. To what extent do the responsibilities of transit agencies in the region overlap, and is their work adequately coordinated?
22. To what extent are the region’s efforts to provide bus service and develop transit corridors adequately coordinated? To what extent does funding for transit corridors adequately balance capital and operating funding needs?
23. How does transit in the Twin Cities region compare with other regions in the country, and how well do transit providers within the Twin Cities region perform?
24. How should the Met Council coordinate with stakeholders to prioritize transit ways for future development based on needs of the region?
25. What is the Met Council’s authority over housing, which is not one of the statutory systems over which the legislature has given it power? Is broader authority over housing “embedded” in the limited powers the council has been given?
26. What are the Met Council’s powers over surface and groundwater interaction, and over drinking water – both supply and quality? Does a regional planning agency provide new, more effective tools to ensure long-term water sustainability, given what is already being done by state agencies

and other governing organizations?

27. Do people exist to serve transit and sewers or does infrastructure exist to serve people?
28. If market demands support people's preferences about where to live and how to get around, what is the role of the Council's housing- and transit-related prescriptions?
29. What is, or should be, the Council's engagement in and authority over the issue of climate change? Over issues related to education and to income disparities?
30. What does planning for economic competitiveness for the Twin Cities region entail and should the Met Council engage in in this kind of planning? Does it have statutory authority to do so?

OTHERS

31. When the Met Council was created 50 years ago, our region was just beginning to grow and there was a substantial need for coordination of regional infrastructure. Does the region still need the Council to do extensive community-building, as it did in the past, or has that already been accomplished?