



Draft Minutes Met Council Task Force

Thursday, March 17, 4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.
Amherst H. Wilder Foundation, Auditorium A
451 Lexington Parkway North - Saint Paul, MN 55104

Members present: John Knapp (**Co-chair**), Jim Erkel, Michele Foster, Shannon Watson, Adeel Lari, Steve Dornfeld, Dan McElroy, Carol Flynn, Ravi Norman, Jim Solem, Chris Gerlach, Susan Arntz (**Co-chair**, via phone) and Acooa Ellis.

Members not present: Sharon Sayles Belton, Peter Bell, Scott Neal, Elizabeth Kautz, Bill Hargis, and John Adams

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

Citizens League members, Board members, and special guests present: Patricia Nauman, Gabriel Flaa, Tenzin Gakyi, Caroline da Silva Barbosa, and Bob Armstrong.

Proposed outcomes for this meeting

- Approve minutes from previous meeting.
- Debrief last meeting.
- Review project status.
- Discuss and finalize recommendations.
- Agree on next steps.
- Evaluate meeting.

Co-Chair John Knapp called the meeting to order at 4:04 p.m.

Welcome, Introductions, Approval of Minutes, Debrief of Previous Meeting, Review Project Status

Introductions

It being the last meeting, co-chair John Knapp thanked staff members Sean Kershaw and Pahoua Hoffman for their support over the course of the project. He also thanked interns Kate, Gabriel, Tenzin, and Caroline.

Approval of Minutes

Co-chair Knapp asked if there were any questions or feedback on the minutes from the March 10th meeting. Dan McElroy moved to approve the minutes. Adeel Lari seconded the motion. A unanimous verbal vote passed the motion to approve the minutes.

Debrief of Previous Meeting

The member who had scored the meeting a “2” at the last meeting rose to explain her score. She felt that outcome of the discussions around the member selection recommendation was based on who was in the room. Understanding that decisions can only be made by those who are present, she could not help but think that the decision to go back and review (and eventually vote on) the Dornfeld-Solem recommendation after the hybrid version did not prevail was not in the spirit of reaching a compromise. Another member commented that while he scored the last meeting higher

than a “2,” he also shared the same frustration and it had to do with a language change in the hybrid recommendation. The earlier concept for a hybrid had local governments appointing some Met Council members, but the final version discussed at the last meeting was more specific and named County Boards as the appointing body. This concerned task force members, especially those representing city interests.

Review Project Status

Co-chair John Knapp asked Sean Kershaw to provide a status on the project again and confirm the timeline. Kershaw commented that today being the last meeting, we lose the ability to see each other face-to-face to ask each other questions or confirm specific language. Because of this, he stressed the importance of clarifying and confirming the final recommendation language today through the discussion.

The plan is still to have a rough draft out to members by Monday, March 21 with a request for feedback by Friday, March 25th. A final draft will be confirmed by March 31 so that it can be approved by the Citizens League Board at its April 4th meeting. Kershaw informed the committee that all are welcomed to attend the April 4th meeting if they’d like to offer comments to the Board, but not required.

Co-chair Knapp mentioned a hearing called by the Subcommittee on Metropolitan Council Accountability and Transparency Committee tomorrow morning. At the end of the discussions today, he wanted to see if it would be premature to share something from the Task Force.

Group Discussion

Transit Questions

Co-chair Knapp referred members to the first item for discussion, the recommendation for further study on transit, entitled “transit questions.” He asked Steve Dornfeld, who staff asked to help draft the recommendation, to walk members through the draft recommendation. Dornfeld confirmed that staff members Sean and Pahoua had asked him to frame up questions that the task force did not have time to fully examine and discuss. He added that he was disappointed that the task force did not have time to explore the fragmented transportation governance, but tried as best he could to state the issues in a neutral manner in the draft recommendation for future study. He framed the questions into three areas:

- Accountability and transparency
- Efficiency and effectiveness
- Equity

In the area of accountability and transparency, he explained that currently it is difficult to figure out who is responsible for what. Even if someone were to have a specific question, it is difficult to find the answer. It’s hard to know to ask the Met Council, the rail authority, CTIB, or maybe all of the above. Dornfeld has tried to get answers to his own questions, and with every website different than the other, it is not an easy task. For example, he tried to go to the CTIB website to find out where their grants were going and could not find an easy way to do that.

In the area of efficiency and effectiveness, the big question is whether the county rail authorities and CTIB have the proper roles and how have these roles affected the Met Council in the area of transit planning. He also thought the process of deciding whether light rail or bus rapid transit is unclear. The task force also did not have time to explore the relationship with the six suburban transit providers. Are these higher subsidies justified by their costs and the level of service they provide? Lastly, he thought it would be wise to examine the relationship between the Met Council and TAB and their joint responsibility in programming federal funds. How is this system really working and are there inefficiencies that could be improved?

In the area of equity, he stated that as road and transit investments are being made, there are some communities who are feeling left behind. There are only so many dollars to go around for projects, but do current plans raise equity issues? Are we treating different parts of the region differently? Opt-out communities versus the non opt-outs. Inner cities versus suburbs.

The idea for the recommendation was to tee up the questions for further study by the Citizens League or by another entity.

Co-chair opened the floor for discussion. A member commented that the transportation governance structure and how the entities within it function are opaque. One reason it is opaque is that the Legislature time and again have created more processes rather than try to substantially address issues. There has been a long history of starts and stops by the Legislature, especially concerning rail transit. It may not be the fault of the Council.

A member raised what he described as a philosophical question: can a system that has been made to be complex by involving different units of government also be transparent?

In discussing efficiency and effectiveness, a member commented that she did not think it was appropriate monies for rail development or new projects be put in the hands of the seven counties, which has been reduced to the five counties, and at some point, it could drop to three counties. She did not think it was efficient to do it that way. She strongly believed it belongs with the Met Council. Change, according to her, can only come through the Legislature if they are willing to make some hard decisions.

Co-chair Knapp referenced the equity questions and commented that he had supported the deletion of a transit-related component in the social equity recommendation because he did not think it was one the task force was ready to make, but supported how Dornfeld framed the questions since it is more neutral. A member added the questions raised in the equity section of this document were also relevant to roads not just transit.

A different member suggested a friendly amendment to add example of inequities or disparities. Issues of equity may mean different things to different people. She suggested specific language such as the disparities between suburbs and core and between opt-outs and other suburbs, and so on so that it is clearer. Dornfeld responded that he had done that in an initial draft but felt he was pitting one against the other, and in the end took it out. A suggestion was made to add roads to the recommendation. In the last sentence under the equity section, Dornfeld indicated he would add vehicles in addition to riders given the change to include roads. A suggestion was made to retitle the recommendation from transit to transportation planning and governance.

A member asked Sean Kershaw when the Citizens League completed its last report on transit or transportation. He responded that it was the *Driving Blind* report in 2005.

A motion was moved by Shannon Watson and seconded by Acooa Ellis to adopt the recommendation as discussed in concept with pending changes.

- **VOTE: 12 voted in favor. 0 opposed.** (One member arrived late and did not vote.)

Governance Recommendation on Member Selection

Co-chair Knapp reminded members that since the hybrid recommendation did not prevail at the last meeting, Task Force members went back to review the two previous recommendations on Met Council member selections, Option 1 and Option 2. After a discussion on Option 1 (the Dornfeld-Solem recommendation) a motion to adopt the recommendation with minor language changes was voted on and prevailed with no opposition. One member did abstain.

A member commented that since he was unable to join the meeting last week when the vote took place, he had some thoughts and comments. A few meetings ago, he was pleased that the group decided, almost unanimously to consider a hybrid option. He did not know whether his attendance last week would have made any difference but he was disappointed. He had hoped the task force would recognize a greater role for local governments – counties and cities. Though he would have preferred his original “pure” proposal with the appointees being the elected officials, the Chair being appointed by the membership etc., he would have been willing to accept a hybrid proposal since this would be moving in the right direction. The member read in the minutes that one of the factors was that the hybrid may not be viewed as “politically plausible,” one of the criteria for task force recommendations. He reminded the committee that the staggered terms recommendation that has already been unanimously adopted by the task force has, in fact, been vetoed many times by different governors so it, too, would not meet the politically plausible threshold. He mentioned that he had talked to staff and understands there will be an opportunity to draft a minority report and he planned on submitting one to be added to the report. He appreciated the time members have devoted to this discussion, respects the final decision, but noted that he is just approaching it from a different point of view. He added that he had been afforded every opportunity to put forward his position and proposals. He was just unable to persuade enough members on the merits of his position. He thanked the task force.

Co-chair Knapp thanked the member for sharing his point of view throughout the project and because of this, his mind has been changed now knowing more about the tensions between local government officials and the Met Council.

A member rose to offer her reflections from the discussion on the member selection recommendation and the final decision. She found the discussion on the merits of the hybrid proposal to be thoughtful, and multi-faceted. It was a good discussion on a complex proposal and how it would be perceived not just by the governor by other local government officials, especially municipalities. She felt good about the discussion and the final decision since a lot of time was spent on it. It was not a quick decision. [No vote was taken since it was adopted at the last meeting and no new language was being proposed.]

Revised Recommendation on Social Equity

The member who was the chief author on the recommendation was not present when it was discussed at the last meeting. She commented that she was disappointed to learn that there were substantial components of the recommendation that were deleted from the recommendation. While she understood why the bullet on housing was deleted, she was troubled by the deletion of the recommendation that sought to align existing resources to better serve the region. She suggested adding back in “but is not limited to” the last sentence to the recommendation so that it reads:

Recommendations

To promote the orderly and economic development for the benefit of the metropolitan region and to advance its social and economic needs, the Citizens League recommends the full deployment of the Metropolitan Council’s authority through the creation of an equity policy plan to reduce concentrations of poverty in the region and foster increased connections to social and economic opportunities. Full utilization of Metropolitan Council authority includes [but is not limited to:](#)

She also offered amended language to replace the first bullet that was deleted from the last meeting:

[The evaluation of existing transit routes to ensure the best means](#) to more directly connect areas of concentrated poverty with job centers and high-growth industry clusters. Determine and communicate current capacity to do so, as well as potential barriers that need to be addressed;

A motion was made and seconded to adopt ⁴ the amendments. Co-chair asked for discussion.

A member had some concerns that other important recommendations that will be included in the report such as staggered terms and the enhanced member selection process may be put at risk in the legislative process by this recommendation since it is asking the Met Council to use its authority to advance concepts of equity that are still in the discussion stages. They are concepts not fully understood at the Legislature and may cause some to be alarmed. He supported the recommendation with the deleted language but will vote against this new version with the added language.

Co-chair Arntz, who joined by phone, clarified that this recommendation was originally written as a recommendation for further study but two meetings ago, it was agreed this should be an actual recommendation to the Met Council and the Legislature. She indicated she was supported of the added language.

A member commented that this ideas around equity as a radical notion. It is one of the arguments for the Southwest rail line. It is one of the arguments for the Bottineau line. It was added the there is already an equity advisory committee to the Met Council. The vision is that the recommendation would support and inform the work they are already tasked to take on. To not have this recommendation would be to be tone deaf to work that is already happening at the Legislature and through the Governor's office.

A member added that aligning resources to close disparities is already behind the scenes for many federal funding allocations. His view of this recommendation is that it sets a direction and is telling the Council to adopt a policy plan, which has the authority to do on any issues that implicates the orderly and economic development of the region. Many transportation planning organizations already has this as a goal. This region is actually behind.

A member rose to support the new language and added that if the downside is that the language is going to frighten some people, he believed they may already be frightened by the idea of social equity as a whole, not two bulleted recommendations from this task force.

A different member commented that half of what counties already do is provide social services. He believed four to five of the seven counties will not look favorably on this recommendation because they already are burden by federal and state mandates. To have regional body direct efforts that they are already providing will not be well received.

A map of transit routes and areas of concentrated poverty was distributed. The member explained that while counties are providing many social services, they are not planning transit routes and described how transit routes were not connecting to job centers. A different member added that the response that counties are already providing needed social services is a fine answer in an environment where things are working. But it is not a good answer in a region in a state like Minnesota that has the economic and income inequalities that it has.

A member asked whether it was possible to put forward a strong recommendation around equity without calling out a policy plan as the vehicle to do that. A different member responded that the regional architecture provides for a policy plan and to have this be the vehicle puts intentionality behind the recommendation at the Council level. If a policy plan is called out, it will be more than what a couple of staff members at the Council can crank out and put on the shelf.

Co-chair asked staff to read the full recommendation with new language so that members could vote:

Recommendations

To promote the orderly and economic development for the benefit of the metropolitan region and to advance its social and economic needs, the Citizens League recommends the full deployment of the Metropolitan Council's authority through the creation of an equity policy plan to reduce concentrations of poverty in the region and foster increased connections to social and economic opportunities. Full utilization of Metropolitan Council authority includes but is not limited to:

1. *The evaluation of existing transit routes to ensure the best means to more directly connect areas of concentrated poverty with job centers and high-growth industry clusters. Determine and communicate current capacity to do so, as well as potential barriers that need to be addressed;*
2. *Use of its research and convening authority to align regional stakeholders on pursuing strategies that will reduce poverty and its concentration, increase economic and social opportunity to advance future economic growth and mitigate the impact of demographic changes, including aging, in the region.*

A motion to approve the recommendation as amended was moved by Acooa Ellis and seconded by Steven Dornfeld.

- **VOTE: 11 voted in favor. 2 opposed.** The motion to adopt the amendment prevailed.

Recommendation for Further Study on Water

Co-chair Susan Arntz reminded members that at the last meeting, the committee agreed to pare down language since the original length suggested that the committee spent more time on it than it did. A member asked whether this was a recommendation to the Council or the Citizens League. It was confirmed that the recommendation is not necessarily for the Met Council. It was suggested that language should be inserted to make that point clearer. It was proposed that the phrase "by the Citizens League" be added to the recommendation to read:

The task force did not study this issue in sufficient detail to provide a recommendation on such an important, regional issue. As such, the task force recommends that this issue be further studied [by the Citizens League](#) to ensure that water supply remains adequate and sustainable across the region, involving all entities involved in its regulation.

A motion was made by Carol Flynn and seconded by Adeel Lari to adopt the recommendation as amended.

- **VOTE: 13 voted in favor. 0 opposed.** The motion to adopt the recommendation to further study water, as amended, prevailed.

Next Steps & Evaluation

Sean Kershaw thanked staff member Pahoua Hoffman on the project, her first study committee. Kershaw also thanked Co-chair Susan Arntz and John Knapp for running a great study and putting in the needed time to keep the project going.

A member expressed concern that the Legislature is already moving forward with hearings. She understands the task for work is two weeks behind and wondered about options. Given the level of discussion that the task force has had and agreement on the recommendations, Sean Kershaw responded staff would be scheduling meetings with key stakeholders. He reminded members that the recommendations are not secret and encouraged them to share. He thought it was fine to

mention the recommendations if it is made clear that they are pending Citizens League board approval.

Pahoua suggested an executive summary that could be released sooner but there was a concern it would not accommodate a minority report that was forthcoming.

The hearing by the Subcommittee on Metropolitan Council Accountability and Transparency Committee that was to take place the following morning was discussed. After the two bills that will be heard were described, it was explained that the bills would be moving on to the Government Operations and Elections Policy committee in the next couple of weeks. Amendments there would be possible. The hope was that by then, the Citizens League would have completed their approval process for the final report. Given the discussion, co-chair Knapp confirmed it would be premature to say anything during the hearing tomorrow.

Adjourn

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