

Citizens League

# voice

Quality conversation. Healthy debate.

BEYOND GRIDLOCK:

WHAT WILL GET US MOVING?



## Back to Our Future

The Citizens League, like good government, thrives on public trust

In any new job, it takes time to understand the inner workings of an organization and how it impacts the community. Nearly a year after I started my work as policy director at the Citizens League it became clear to me—after attending many listening sessions with longtime members and reading old reports on [citizensleague.org](http://citizensleague.org)—that our organization’s core business is (and always has been) as much about earning public trust as it is about developing policy.

In 1951, concerned men and women who wanted a better-functioning local government organized to study other municipalities around the country. With rare exceptions, they found that where there was responsible and responsive leadership there was also an active and informed citizenry. Enthused by what they learned and what might be possible in Minnesota, the cohort held “fireside” meetings to galvanize support for a citizen-led organization devoted to helping local and county governments function more efficiently, effectively, and equitably.

On February 14, 1952, nearly 200 people attended a meeting at which they unanimously voted to organize the Citizens League as a nonprofit



**Organizations that work to transcend the day’s political litmus tests and backbiting represent our best hope.”**

organization that would be “completely and absolutely nonpartisan, concerned only with presenting the public with facts upon which each citizen may reach an intelligent decision.” Since then, we’ve organized our work around the idea that when invested community members work together they routinely come up with the best way to address their common problems.

When my parents and I arrived in the United States as refugees from Laos in 1976, it was ordinary people and trusted institutions that helped my family get established. Growing up, I was surrounded by individuals who were committed to serving others and doing their part for the common good. Having fled a country that did not want them, my parents were very serious about studying for their citizenship exams, taking turns asking each other the anticipated questions. In 1986, my father proudly shared a letter he had received from then U.S. Representative Martin Olav Sabo, who had provided assistance on a passport matter. He could not believe that a busy congress member would take time to help him. A year before Rep. Sabo passed away, I had the opportunity to recount this story to him directly when he attended a Citizens League meeting I’d organized.

Over the past decade, increased political and social polarization has conspired to erode the people’s confidence in its public institutions. According to Pew Research Center data gathered from 1958 to 2017, trust in government remains at or near historically low levels across generational, racial, and ethnic lines. This distrust has trickled down into our daily lives. Instead of banding together to come up with the best ways to move forward,



PHOTO: NANCY MUSINGUZI

we too often surrender to cynicism, cutting ourselves off from commonsense solutions and out-of-the-box ideas.

This is particularly concerning because there is a growing list of pressing issues—education, health care, transportation—that affect all of us, regardless of political affiliation. And we’re going to need a reenergized civic infrastructure to respond to challenges such as the achievement gap, the needs of an aging population, and a shrinking workforce.

All of this is why, as I begin my work as the Citizens League’s new executive director, I’ve chosen to focus first and foremost on our roots. We know that effective governance and a healthy society require that concerned members of the public and their elected representatives be presented with unbiased, comprehensive data and a diversity of informed opinion. We know that the public good requires smart public policy. And we know that organizations that work to transcend the day’s political litmus tests and backbiting represent our best hope.

I hope that you, our members and future members, will also find that the Citizens League’s mission, exemplified by our 65-year history and illuminated in the pages of this magazine, is as important today as it’s ever been. Together, we can help rebuild the public’s trust in its institutions and in the public itself. 🌟

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A GOOD DEBATE

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## voice

### OUR MISSION

*Citizens League Voice* stimulates quality conversation and meaningful debate by engaging Minnesotans of all backgrounds and ideologies with non-sensational journalism and fact-driven essays designed to explore the most effective policy solutions for today and tomorrow.

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COVER AND "A GOOD DEBATE" ILLUSTRATIONS: CAITLIN KUHWALD

# One Meal at a Time

Mary Sue Hansen and Peggy Huot-Hansen set the table for in-depth conversations about issues that call for community

BY AMY GOETZMAN

Newcomers to Minnesota—whether they come from Kansas or Myanmar—often find that it can be a little cold in the Land of 10,000 Lakes, in more ways than one. Longtime inhabitants tend to socialize with the same people they have always known, surrounding themselves (intentionally or unintentionally) with familiar experiences and viewpoints. Even as the state ages and diversifies, there's still precious little interaction across races, cultures, faiths, classes, and generations.

“There is a real gap in how we socialize in Minnesota. We aren't neighborly,” says Mary Sue Hansen, director of the Suburban Ramsey Family Collaborative (SRFC), a partnership of schools, government agencies, nonprofits, health providers, and youth organizations that concentrates on wellness, learning, safety, and security. “When we don't know people who are different, we can be suspicious of that difference. We don't understand each other. Ultimately, that contributes to the very serious problems we are now facing in our state—issues like policing, achievement gaps, lack of equity, and lack of opportunity.”

Hansen had spent two-thirds of her 30-year SRFC career working with program manager Peggy Huot-Hansen (no relation) on prevention and early-intervention initiatives, helping at-risk individuals and families navigate mental health challenges, racism, housing needs, and educational barriers. As the years had passed, the two had become increasingly convinced that for the agency to properly serve the people walking through its doors, the wider community had to be cognizant of the issues affecting its members, no matter their economic circumstance or social status. In the wake of that realization, they sought to engage as many people as possible in a more inclusive kind of interaction.

Then, in 2015, Hansen got invited to a dinner at Marnita's Table.

“When we don't know people who are different, we can be suspicious of that difference. Ultimately, that contributes to the very serious problems we are now facing in our state.”



PHOTO: MICHAEL DVORAK

Mary Sue Hansen (left) and Peggy Huot-Hansen have discovered the secret to building meaningful community connections.

## Radical Hospitality

In the hopes of creating new connections and encouraging dialogue on a variety of pressing issues, Marnita Schroedl had begun hosting big dinners in her Minneapolis home when she relocated from the Pacific Northwest in the mid-'90s. At first the goal was just to get know her neighbors a bit better. By 2005, the popularity of the get-togethers had convinced Schroedl to formalize the experience and brand it Marnita's Table. Then she began to look for ways to partner with other organizations and expand, including planning trainings for people and organizations that wanted to host their own dinners, which have come to be known as Intentional Social Interactions, or IZIs. (And yes, the Z stands for “Social.” It just sounds more fun that way.)

“The moment I heard about the IZI model at Marnita's Table, I knew it would work for [SRFC],” Hansen remembers. “I knew it would thrive

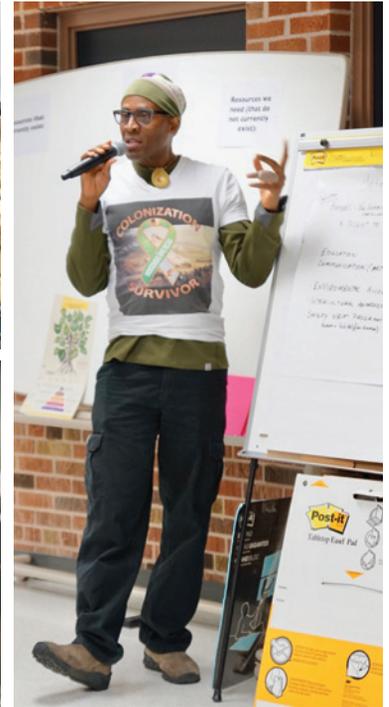
in a school and community setting and help us get to the heart of what is ailing our community. When you sit down, break bread together, and hear each other's stories, all kinds of amazing things happen.”

Each IZI has a theme, such as education or homelessness, and the guests—as many as 150 at a time—come from a wide variety of ages, economic conditions, and cultural backgrounds. Someone greets people at the door and shows them to a table. Each table has a set of conversation-starter cards, with questions such as “Do you have a favorite tradition, holiday, or ritual?” and “What is the best advice you've ever received?” People sit down together, start with the questions, and then move on to more natural conversation. Inevitably, say Hansen and Huot-Hansen, people find that they have more in common than they thought.

“Almost everyone who's been to an IZI has been transformed. The experience

teaches us ways to bridge differences,” Hansen says. “I’ll hear people say, ‘Look at how much we have in common,’ and ‘I never knew that.’ Sometimes people will discover they already have connections. At one event, the mothers of two girls who were friends at school met for the first time. One was Muslim and the other was probably from a Judeo-Christian background. After the mothers made a connection, they were put at ease, and the girls were allowed to play at each other’s houses.”

Since 2014, more than 5,000 people in Ramsey County have attended an IZI event hosted by Hansen and Huot-Hansen at SRFC. As a result, the organization has seen increased parent engagement with schools, the development of leadership skills in youths, and better relationships between students and teachers. Shifts occur in both understanding and behavior. “A teacher who attended an IZI had, you could say, a reputation for being strict with her students,” Huot-Hansen says. “After she saw them working in this setting, and heard them share their perspectives, she changed. They started getting positive phone calls home. Instead of handing down punishments, she would say, ‘I want to hear your side of the story,’ and that simple act of listening—that was incredible to the students. It led to more positive interactions across the school. Our hope is that this kind of understanding rolls out to communities.”



Clockwise from top left: Food and family build relationships at an IZI event; learning about trauma and resiliency at a community event in October 2016; V.J. Smith, CEO and president of the Minneapolis MAD DADS chapter, engages with a neighbor.

### Setting the Table

In 2017, the Citizens League launched the Calling Home initiative, designed to help people of all ages and backgrounds prepare for the needs of a rapidly aging population. As is often the case when staff at the organization look to engage different communities and community members throughout the state, they knew it would be important to find people who have deep relationships and roots in various cities, towns, and neighborhoods.

Since the number of Ramsey County residents over age 65 is expected to double between 2014 and 2040, and because Hansen and Huot-Hansen are so well liked, well regarded, and well connected

in the Ramsey County suburbs, they were asked to plan a series of Calling Home events. The two women’s connections, sensibilities, and experiences with IZIs paid off immediately. Not only were they able to gather a representative group of adults from the area, but they made sure to reach out to younger people too. “You have to go where the energy is, and the energy is with the youth,” explains Huot-Hansen.

The two women recruited high school students to welcome attendees, serve as hosts, and even facilitate certain gatherings. Some of the kids were already integrally involved in the lives of older relatives and neighbors. For others, like Naeem Williams, a junior at Mahtomedi High School, it was a brand new experience.

“It’s good to get out of my youth bubble and learn from the older generation. We related situations from our own lives, talking around food, everyone feeling relaxed and safe,” says the 17-year-old, who sat at a table and facilitated a conversation at one Calling Home event. “I learned to appreciate elders and all they’ve accomplished. I hope they learned that youth do care about them and we won’t leave them behind.” 🌸

**AMY GOETZMAN** is a writer and editor. Her work—which focuses on the arts, culture, technology, and environmental issues—has appeared in *MinnPost*, *Architecture Minnesota*, and the *Star Tribune*. She lives in the suburban Ramsey area.

By David Schimke

# The Courage to Ask

Conflict consultant Robert Stains says productive conversation begins and ends with thoughtful questions

It's the first thing scribbled in a dog-eared notebook that, since it was filled over the course of three-day dialogue training at Wellesley College, I have returned to repeatedly.

*When certainty comes through the door, curiosity goes out the window.*

Since my memory is nearly as bad as my handwriting, I'm not sure which one of the workshop's leaders shared the phrase—Sallyann Roth, a founding associate of Boston's Public Conversations Project (since renamed Essential Partners), which hosted the workshop, or Bob Stains, a senior associate at the organization who has trained over 25,000 people in 17 countries. What I do remember, and have carried with me in the two years since completing the introductory course, *The Power of Dialogue: Constructive Conversations on Divisive Issues*, is the sense of possibility that coursed through our classroom. We were of different ages, ethnicities, professions, political persuasions, and schools of faith. Yet, when the seminar was over, there was no doubt that when discussions are crafted thoughtfully, ruinous negativity can be avoided, analytical nuance is achievable, and mutual respect is inevitable.

When I recently told Bob about the Citizens League's civic-minded membership, we agreed it would be wise to talk about the art of asking good questions, which is the first thing he and Roth teach people who are looking for ways to affirmatively navigate the world's increasingly antagonistic terrain.



**ROBERT STAINS, M.Ed.**, is founder and principal of Bob Stains and Associates, Conflict Transformation. A consultant for the Harvard Negotiation Project, he has also served as an adjunct faculty member at Mitchell Hamline School of Law.

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**Scrub your questions of any intent to change the mind of the other or to shame the other.**

**DAVID SCHIMKE:** Why is it so important to expose ourselves to other points of view?

**ROBERT STAINS:** I was just giving a workshop last week and one of the participants used a metaphor that seemed kind of tired at first, but as he spoke it really took on new life in my mind. He used the image of a jigsaw puzzle. He said: "A community is a jigsaw puzzle, represented by different people with different ideas. And we can either have partial solutions or full solutions. In order to get full solutions we need all the pieces of the puzzle. We could go ahead and survive and limp forward with some of the pieces missing, but it's a much stronger community with all the pieces in place."

The other thing is, if you are ultimately going to engage in debate, if you're going to engage in an exchange in which you're going to try to advance your ideas, you're better off knowing where the attachment points might be, where something might resonate with somebody. And you find that out by understanding them.

**DS:** What is the definition of intentional dialogue?

**RS:** I ask people to think about driving down the street or on the highway and all of a sudden in the rearview mirror they see flashing lights and they maybe hear a voice say, "Pull the car over to the side of the road, please." And I ask them to think about what's going through their mind at that point. What's going through their body? Where

is their focus? And we talk about the experience of being triggered into a response that's automatic. It's like that when people are involved in political and ideological exchanges where there is no intention, there's just a lot of reaction. People are just being triggered and responding to that trigger without any depth or any nuance or choice. An intentional dialog gets us to step back from that trigger and reactive experience and decide, in advance, our intention and purpose.

**DS:** What role does the act of asking thoughtful questions play in this process?

**RS:** Thoughtful questions are invitations for people to go more widely and deeply into what they care about and who they are, which creates a place for them to feel seen and heard. When we feel seen and heard, it really changes how we are with somebody, whether it's somebody that we love or somebody that we deeply disagree with. So it starts to shape a new kind of dynamic where if you get curious about me and ask more genuine questions—which also tells me you've been listening to me—I'm more likely to get curious about you. And now we can explore a lot of possible overlapping experiences and values that weren't available to us before.

**DS:** What are some of the key components of a well-crafted question?

**RS:** So the first thing to think about is what's the purpose of



your question. Are you genuinely curious about the other person? Or are you trying to make a statement or convince somebody that they're wrong, et cetera? You want to scrub your questions of any intent to change the mind of the other or to shame the other. I'll use the example of a Hillary voter talking to a Trump voter. So the Trump voter says, "I voted for Donald Trump," and instead of there just being an embarrassed silence, the Hillary voter could say, "Oh, that's really interesting. What values do you have that led you to vote for Donald Trump? Where did you first learn those values?" Instead of saying, "How could you do that?" Or "How do you reconcile voting for this man when you have these other values?" You don't want your question to be a challenge, but a sincere inquiry.

**DS:** What makes a good listener?

**RS:** In our world we talk about taking the non-expert stance. That is being completely open to the reality of the other person without a preconceived notion of what you think their answers will be or where they're going to go with something. It's really being open to whoever they are and curious about whatever they think. The second is what I call presence. To be with somebody and to let him or her know you're with them by nodding and uh-huhing and maybe repeating back every once in a while

what you understand about what they're saying. This lets people know that you're there, and it encourages them to open up and go deeper.

**DS:** And going deeper can result in people sharing stories. Why is that important?

**RS:** When I was a kid my grandparents were from Italy and they had stories about the Irish. Y'know, the Irish were this and the Irish were that. So when I first met an actual Irish person those were the impersonal images I had in my head. And that's an imprisoning story. Now, when we create a space for people to tell their particular tales, it resonates with us differently. We get to know who people really are by understanding their experiences. It's a humanizing process. I think it was [the Christian theologian] Origen who said, "In the particular is the universal."

**DS:** Are there some basic ground rules that are good for people to keep in mind when they're about to enter into these sorts of conversations?

**RS:** Don't interrupt people when they're speaking—that's a big one because it's one of those things that people do to shut other people up, unintentionally or intentionally. I also think, especially in the beginning, you should have time limits for asking and answering. Otherwise somebody will often dominate timewise. They'll take up a lot of

space and therefore take up a lot of the energy. You should avoid name-calling, of course; avoid statements of judgment and resist the temptation to impute motive or to convert the other to your point of view.

**DS:** Is it important that both people come to the conversation prepared to be vulnerable, as well?

**RS:** I wouldn't use the word *vulnerable*. I think it scares people. The word that's in my mind is *permeable*. And that is willing to be touched in some way by the other person. And, because we're talking about the range of human experience and not just an exchange of opinion, there's a lot of latitude there. So I can be willing to be touched by somebody's story while still being completely closed and not open at all to their argument.

**DS:** You don't have to change their minds and they don't have to change yours.

**RS:** Yeah. Locally, the Respectful Conversations Project of the Minnesota Council of Churches speaks of "changing hearts, not minds." And let me say one more thing about that, because some approaches will ask people to set aside judgment. I don't think that's possible. I really don't think that's possible. What I do think is possible is to set aside expressions of judgment and condemnation toward another. And that's very important. ✨

# BEYOND GRIDLOCK



Excerpted and adapted from “Getting from Here to There: Funding Transit in the Region,” a report prepared by the Citizens League Transit Study Committee, 2016–2017

**A**nyone following the ongoing discussion involving mobility issues in Minnesota is likely aware that the future of transportation in general and transit in particular has become so contentious that it has prevented resolution of other important initiatives at the legislature. To overcome this political gridlock and get the state moving in the right direction, a number of areas will need to be examined by engaged citizens and their representatives:

- Policymakers and media should reevaluate the scope and understanding of key concepts and definitions. For example, “transit” is not a specific mode of transportation (e.g., trains or buses). As a Citizens League report noted in 1973, “transit” is riding,” and while it takes many forms, it is as simple as providing service to a passenger or passengers.

- Statewide, the number of adults age 65 or older will increase sharply by 2030. According to data compiled by the Metropolitan Council, the net gain in

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*Improved mobility for workers at all skill levels is essential to Minnesota’s economic health.*

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the next decade will range between 285,000 and 335,000 people. This compares with an increase of 91,000 adults during the 2000s. By 2029, for the first time in Minnesota history, the number of adults over age 65 will exceed the number of children ages 5 to 17. Mobility will become more important for economic and social reasons as this unprecedented demographic change unfolds.

- Declines in workforce growth, increases in concentrations of poverty, and the dispersion of job centers from core downtown locations need to be accounted for. Improved mobility for workers at all skill levels is essential to Minnesota’s economic health.

- Rapid changes in technology—ride sharing, auton-

omous vehicles—will have an enormous impact on mobility over the next 5 to 15 years.

- A decision will need to be made regarding what forces are best suited to play a leading role. One option (addressed in “The People’s Roads, Rails, and Robots,” p. 10) would be to find ways for elected representatives to overcome their geographic, ideological, and other differences. Another approach would be to further empower market forces to ensure that Minnesotans can move around efficiently and affordably (see “Movement in the Marketplace,” p. 12).

**In economic terms,** transit serves three functions. It can move individuals who do not or cannot use other forms of transportation. It provides



# WHAT WILL GET US MOVING?

travel options for those who do not wish to bear the economic, social, and environmental costs of operating a car, often in traffic congestion. And it supports more compact and mixed-use forms of development.

Like that of other regions, the Twin Cities' transit planning is complicated, fragmented, and at times difficult for the public to understand. Some may even argue that the region is underperforming when compared to like-sized metropolitan areas like Denver, Dallas, San Diego, Seattle, and Phoenix. In part, this is because transit relies on relatively unstable taxes, and funding is subject to the approval of decision-making bodies that may oppose transit as a whole, or disagree with specific plans for capital costs and operational

funds on an unpredictable, case-by-case basis.

In fact, although the current architecture for transit planning and funding in the region *functions*, it may not be what one would design from a blank slate. The system is, after all, the result of almost 50 years of legislative improvisation. In 1967, both the Metropolitan Council and the Metropolitan Transit Commission were established as a result of different bills that passed on the last day of the session with little coordination. Since then, disagreements have arisen between regional entities, and between regional entities and local interests, that have required intervention at the state level. The disputes center on the extent and

character of local governance, and the changing political makeup of the legislature has resulted in a series of back-and-forth decisions.

Moving forward, whether government is able to adapt in the name of leadership, or private enterprise is empowered to fill the void, there need to be strategies in place to account for the following:

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*In order to encourage more ridership, there needs to be safe, accessible, and convenient options that enable point-to-point connections.*

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**First- and Last-Mile Connections**

When people commute from their homes to transit, or vice versa, they must decide how they will get to and from the pickup point. This difference is sometimes referred to as the “first- and last-mile” problem. In order to encourage more ridership, there needs to be safe, accessible, and convenient options that enable point-to-point connections. In many cases, helping people traverse this distance could involve creating access to better biking and walking routes. (According to Minnesota Public Radio, about 75 percent of St. Paul and Minneapolis workers reported walking a distance as

ILLUSTRATIONS: CATLIN KUHWALD

part of their commute in 2015. That number has been rising in the last decade.)

**Metro Mobility**

Ridership on Metro Mobility—an indispensable service of the Metropolitan Council for people who are unable to use regular fixed-route bus service due to a disability or health condition—is growing rapidly. Rides on Metro Mobility are also the region’s most costly to provide and are already creating budget concerns for other elements of regional transit. Decisions about how to reconcile the costs of providing this federally mandated program should include the following factors: the value of ensuring that certified riders are contributing members of society; the capacity of certified users to pay for the service; and the money necessary to provide robust paratransit services.

**Overall Population Growth in the Region**

The Metropolitan Council’s regional forecast shows that the Twin Cities region will gain 802,000 residents over the next three decades, bringing the region’s population to 3,652,000 by 2040. About two-thirds of this population increase is anticipated to be natural growth: according to the Met Council, the number of people born will be greater than the number of people who die.

**Demographic Changes**

Racial and geographic disparities in employment rates in the Twin Cities are

*While many transit routes serve North Minneapolis, residents have limited access to jobs within a 45-minute commute.*

stark. In 2016, the Twin Cities’ regional unemployment rate was an estimated 3.8 percent. The unemployment rate in North Minneapolis was 22.3 percent, and for African American men the rate was 52 percent. Additionally, while many transit routes serve North Minneapolis, residents have limited access to jobs within a 45-minute commute.

The metro region will also become more racially diverse as a result of migration and higher birth rates among Latino, black, and Asian populations, with people of color rising from 24 percent of regional population in 2010 to 41 percent in 2040. The overall population of people of color will grow from 676,000 to nearly 1.5 million over the same period. The changing makeup of the state is important as policymakers and business leaders consider who is currently using transit and who will likely be using transit in the future.

**Future Job Growth**

While there is estimated to be one job opening per job seeker in the metro area, Yingling Fan, an associate professor at the Humphrey School of

Public Affairs in the regional and policy area, noted in a 2016 research report that “spatial mismatch is a serious problem in the Twin Cities region, and it appears to have worsened since the turn of the millennium. The biggest concentrations of unemployed workers lack frequent transit service to some of the richest concentrations of job vacancies, particularly jobs in the south and southwest metro.”

**Emerging Technologies**

Autonomous vehicles or driverless cars use a wide range of new technologies to eliminate the need for human operators, and they can literally take individuals and goods door to door without the need for a human to do anything except determine the starting point and the destination.

While there is disagreement over whether game-changing innovations on this front will be available in 10 or even 20 years, the mere possibility that a new breed of automobile could arrive to sate and save America’s car culture has become a popular topic in mainstream media. (In November, the *New York Times* filled an



**RULES OF ENGAGEMENT**

The impetus behind the creation of **A Good Debate** was a recognition that meaningful conversation and respectful, evidence-based discourse is lacking in popular media and the public sphere. Our desire in each issue of *Citizens League Voice* is to model thoughtful dialogue that encourages disagreement while discouraging rancor.

Every quarter, those who turn to the cover package will be presented with **Just**

**the Facts**, designed to provide objective context for a specific question or area of disagreement. What follows is a carefully planned and vetted collection of **Opening Arguments**, written by policymakers, academics, and engaged community members representing a wide range of opinion and expertise. Participants work closely with *Voice* editors to hone their positions and are encouraged to rely on logic and best evidence. Personal attacks, red herrings, and assumptions, particularly those that involve cultural or ideological stereotypes, are discouraged.

A **Cross-Exam** of each contributor rounds out the section. Conducted by the editors, this is an effort to further explore the nuance of each argument and provide a model for thoughtful questioning.

**Why “Beyond Gridlock”?**

Minnesota, like the rest of the country, is in the midst of preparing for a number of changes that will impact the state’s economic health and quality of life, including an aging population, an increasingly diverse workforce, and higher concentrations of urban and rural poverty. To begin

entire issue of its Sunday magazine with articles speculating on the subject.) Partly as a result of this attention, those discussing and debating the future of transit often end up pivoting to the consequences of future invention. In particular, those who favor free-market solutions point to the inevitability of these developments as a reason to both phase government out of the transit business altogether and abandon big-ticket items, like added light rail lines.

To be sure, the region is seeing the increased use of alternatives to car-sharing services, such as Zipcar and Hourcar, as well as ride-share services, including Lyft and Uber. By providing transportation access on-demand for individuals, these offerings lessen the need for single-car ownership; people pay for access only when they need it.

Autonomous vehicles would make the aforementioned services even more affordable. It is anticipated by some, in fact, that the ability to subscribe to a car service will eventually replace a significant amount of car ownership because it will be

much less costly—perhaps just one-third the price of owning and insuring a vehicle. By reducing the cost of transit and increasing the efficiency of moving large numbers of people, including those who are elderly or disabled, these vehicles also have the potential to either complement or compete against publicly funded transit services. More generally, autonomous vehicles could reduce the need for, or change the use of, parts of our current physical transportation infrastructure.

For instance, the need for metered street parking, parking lots, and parking facilities, which consume a significant amount of downtown and other urban land, would decrease because autonomous vehicles don't require the parking that current single-occupancy cars require.

Some new technologies could also be incorporated over time into signage, lane markers, and other means for cars to “talk” to each other and the roadways.

It's worth noting that one of the most common professions in Minnesota is that of truck driver, and this job category will all but disappear if autonomous

vehicles are fully integrated and deployed. The impact—positive and negative—on other professions is hard to predict.

Most crucially, for the purposes of the debate playing out on the following pages, the marketplace is spending billions on driverless technology. The question is whether affordability and accessibility are likely without government oversight.

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*New technologies will be incorporated over time into signage, lane markers, and other means for driverless cars to “talk” to each other and the roadways.*

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**A year in,** it's still unknown what the Trump administration's priorities will be with regard to transportation infrastructure, or how this will affect federal funding for transit. Throughout his campaign, candidate Trump advocated for an “America First” plan that includes the privatization of some components that would be subsidized, in part, by tax credits. He often praised the advanced rail lines of Asia and expressed displeasure with systems in the United States.

These positions pose an interesting dilemma for Republicans, because while the GOP's stance is to cut funding for public transit, including first- and last-mile connections, President Trump has said that mobility options in the United States are at third-world levels and need to be improved. On the other side of the aisle, Democrats are likely to find themselves having to defend the incremental nature of governance, which could both fall behind rapidly changing demographics and fail to take timely advantage of marketplace innovations.

Read the full text of “Getting from Here to There: Funding Transit in the Region,” at [citizensleague.org/projects/transit-study-committee](http://citizensleague.org/projects/transit-study-committee).



to meet these challenges, a holistic plan to address mobility issues around the state is essential. For the last several years, however, a seemingly intractable partisan divide—characterized by geographic differences, competing budget priorities, and disagreements over the scope and size of public funding—has slowed improvements to transit systems and forestalled essential improvements to existing roads and highways. In the hopes of loosening this gridlock, we chose to consider whether the government or the free market could or should lead the way forward.

## The Participants

Opening Arguments begin with an essay from **Laura Monn Ginsburg**, co-owner of the public affairs firm Apparatus, which coproduces a podcast about how the ways in which we commute impact our quality of life. A believer in free-market innovation, she nevertheless posits that, especially when it comes to mobility issues, government oversight and coordination are essential to guarantee access and workability.

**Randal O'Toole**, a senior fellow at the CATO Institute, argues that the free market is best situated to provide the

most efficient options to the greatest number of people, regardless of economic circumstance. He's particularly intrigued by the potential for autonomous vehicles to unclog the state's roads.

For an analysis of current political history, we turn to Dakota County Commissioner **Mary Liz Holberg**, who served in the state legislature for 18 years. An expert on transit financing, she contends that people on all sides need to compromise, shift their expectations, and avoid partisan, as well as urban and rural, stereotypes.

# THE PEOPLE'S ROADS, RAILS, AND ROBOTS

Anticipatory governance will democratize groundbreaking technology

BY LAURA MONN GINSBURG

In 30 years, we'll know if we did it right. For the moment, though, we're in the process of navigating massive upheaval in regards to mobility and rapid technological change. The near future promises further electrification of transit systems, the arrival of self-driving vehicles, and continued innovation among car-sharing services. Changing demographics suggest that mobility needs, as well as attitudes about various modes of travel, are experiencing seismic shifts.

Some 10,000 Americans will turn 65 every day for the next 19 years, says the Pew Research Center. And while the data is inconclusive regarding whether or not Millennials love or hate the idea of car ownership, there's no doubt that the generation's professional and creative classes prefer living in densely populated areas. The biggest question, then, is not if a revolution in the way we move around the state is coming, but whether we will let it happen *to us* or *with us*.

## THE CONCLUSION:

Anticipatory governance ensures equitable access to free-market innovations.

## THE ARGUMENTS:

- The way people move around is changing rapidly.
- A statewide transit plan requires institutional foresight.
- Private enterprise is primarily accountable to the bottom line.
- Good government defines outcomes and avoids disruption.
- Entrepreneurs are appropriately fast. Elected officials are necessarily slow.

To ensure success in Minnesota, experience tells me, we need collaboration between invested communities and business leaders, with elected officials and government agencies playing the role of both balanced arbiter and democratic guide.

While some scoff at the notion that driverless cars will be rolling down our highways and byways anytime soon, there's no disputing that immense changes in our modes of mobility are already upon us. Take the ubiquitous wunderkind Tesla: There are estimates that by April of this year, the Palo Alto-based electric car company will be worth more than GM (something GM disputes, but there's no disputing Tesla's "it" factor right now). In cities nationwide, we're seeing the emergence of test projects that assume a future where passengers quite literally take a back seat: driverless Waymo (Google) vans in Denver; driverless Uber cars in Pittsburgh and Phoenix; driverless EasyMile buses in Walnut Creek, CA. The list goes on.

In Minnesota, we're testing driverless buses in time to showcase at this year's Super Bowl. These projects provide an exciting glimpse at what's coming around the corner, as well as a welcome break from the gridlock on our roads and in the legislature. Without proper foresight and integrated planning, however, these "disruptive" forces (a term entrepreneurs love) could end up leaving too many citizens on the side of the road.

I'm going to throw a term at you that might dissuade you from reading more, but hear me out. It just might make you think a bit differently about the appropriate role of government, especially when all

kinds of neat stuff is coming out of the private sector.

*Anticipatory governance.* The concept is as simply defined as it is tricky to execute, but when it comes to things like roads, rails, and robotic cars, it's essential. Anticipatory governance requires citizens and their representatives to think through potential outcomes in advance of an upheaval or reinvention. It also demands that stakeholders define what they want outcomes to be before unleashing something as revolutionary as, say, a fleet of self-driving buses.

This pragmatic, somewhat unglamorous approach is what good government is all about. Unlike companies that are beholden to profit margins and a (usually homogeneous) group of shareholders, elected representatives must answer to their constituents. When they abuse their position or violate our trust, they can be held accountable by anyone with the power to vote. In practical terms, this means state and county officials are more compelled than free-market forces to ensure not only that new technologies are efficient, but that the companies involved are required to put the consumer first, no matter their economic status or geographic location.

When it comes to mobility in particular, industry simply is not set up to ensure that society's most vulnerable communities, the elderly and those with disabilities, will be served. There's also no guarantee,

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without regulation and wise guidance, that our most vulnerable citizens, particularly in poor communities of color that are already underserved by transit, won't be marginalized even further.

Is government slower than the market? Yes. The Googles and Ubers of the world can change lanes unfettered by public comment periods and the vagaries of *Robert's Rules of Order*. Is government sometimes gridlocked by its own inefficiencies? Yes. Transit funding has become a nasty wedge issue at the legislature, and we are in jeopardy of falling behind as a progressive, forward-thinking state with every fight. Does any of this mean the government shouldn't lead on issues concerning mobility? No. Governments worry about the things that business can't and won't.

**Recently, my business** partner and I, as part of our work at Apparatus (a think tank where we apply strategic communications to shift mindsets and build policy), produced a 10-episode podcast series, *Here to There*, in which we accompanied a range of Twin Cities residents on their commutes.

Each episode started with a trip and ended in the studio, where we talked to policymakers, advocates, transportation experts, business leaders, union representatives, and an assortment of everyday people: a Millennial who chooses to bike for environmental reasons; a baby-boomer retiree who moved to a dense area of St. Paul for its walkability; and a disability-rights advocate who showed us just how difficult it can be to get around the streets in her neighborhood, even though they're technically compliant with federal and state standards. We learned a lot about the choices and lack of choices people have when it comes to getting

from A to B. We also got to have nuanced discussion about accessibility, affordability, and equity.

(To hear our interviews, visit [www.heretotherepodcast.org](http://www.heretotherepodcast.org).)

The story that had the greatest impact on me came in our penultimate episode, when we carpooled with two Somali men from their homes in the East Phillips neighborhood of Minneapolis to their jobs at the Amazon Fulfillment Center in Shakopee. Amazon provides both men with a higher wage and better perks than either could find closer to home. Unfortunately, these advantages come with a commute that's both burdensome and cumbersome.

One of the interviewees, Zac, started working at Amazon before the company started providing its commuter shuttle from Cedar Riverside, and he did not have the credit necessary to buy a car. He had to get up at 3:30 a.m., take the local bus to the light rail, take the light rail to the Mall of America, and then get a bus from Mall of America to Shakopee. It often took two hours each way—and that was on top of a 10-hour shift that starts at 6:30 a.m.

Amazon made choices that benefited its bottom line, and the outcome was that the workers it needed weren't anywhere near the facility. Ultimately they underwrote a commuter bus, but as we heard from one of our commuters, it only makes two stops, Cedar Riverside and Shakopee, so you're still on your own to connect yourself to the bus. Amazon can't be faulted for acting responsibly (as defined by corporate America, anyway), but our experience exposed what can happen and how people can be left behind when we let the free market make decisions.

**I don't think** we should slow technological advancements, particularly when it comes to transit. As an environmentalist, I'm

excited for a day when more electric and shared vehicles increase efficiency and decrease emissions. As a mother, I look forward to the perfection of driverless technology (especially if it comes in time to keep my son from becoming that 16-year-old with a brand new license). As a daughter of baby boomers, I'm happy to know that my parents may be able to take advantage of mobility options that give them more flexibility and freedom.

That said, I also look forward to the day when my kids, parents, and peers are equitably, thoughtfully, and holistically integrated into a greater plan for my city and state. Anticipatory governance is the key to all this. It allows for the government—the body whose business it is to ensure a healthy, vibrant, safe place for all of us to live—to do its job of assessing the broad and singular needs of its constituents and setting its sights on the outcomes we need to achieve as a collective.

Yes, business and a well-funded market move fast and are often more imaginative than your typical government body. Speed is not always the friend of quality, however. When it comes to absorbing, implementing, and benefiting from the immense transportation changes we're experiencing, focusing on the outcomes we want is paramount. Business will always look out for itself. We need to make sure someone is looking out for the rest of us.



**LAURA MONN GINSBURG** is co-owner at Apparatus, a Minneapolis-based public affairs firm working at the nexus of social, natural, and built systems. A Citizens League board member, she lives in Minneapolis with her husband, son, and dog.

# MOVEMENT IN THE MARKETPLACE

Business, not government, should lead the way on mobility issues

BY RANDAL O'TOOLE

Urban transit is one of the nation's most heavily subsidized consumer-based industries, gobbling \$50 billion a year from taxpayers to cover more than three-fourths of its costs. According to the Federal Transit Administration's National Transit Database, Twin Cities transit fares covered only 15 percent of 2016 costs, and subsidies totaled more than two-thirds of a billion dollars. This makes mass transit one of the most expensive forms of travel, costing more than four times as much to move a passenger one mile as an automobile—even after factoring in the public dollars spent on highways.

It wasn't always this way. Some 50 years ago, as shown by the late author Charles Lave, an economist at the University of California, Irvine, transit was mostly private and mostly profitable. And there are still vestiges of private, profitable transit scattered around the United States today. These systems show that taxpayers and most transit riders would benefit from privatization of the nation's largest transit systems.

Municipalization led to a collapse in transit productivity, in part because transit agencies often fall prey to mission creep, going from providing mobility for those who can't or don't want to drive to trying to entice people out of their cars. To provide luxury transit services to middle-class neighborhoods, agencies cut affordable services to low-income neighborhoods, often losing more riders than they gained and reducing the average number of trips taken per transit-vehicle mile by more than 30 percent. Transit agencies also eagerly took advantage of politicians' desires for infrastructure-heavy projects such as light rail and downtown bus centers, which allowed elected officials to pass out construction contracts and take credit for creating make-work jobs but did little for transit riders.

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To provide luxury transit services to middle-class neighborhoods, agencies cut affordable services to low-income neighborhoods.”

Between 1985 and 1995, for example, Los Angeles Metro financed rail construction into white neighborhoods by cutting bus service to minority neighborhoods, losing four bus riders for every rail rider gained. A lawsuit filed in 1994 by the NAACP and LA's Bus Riders Union led a federal court to order Metro to restore bus service for 10 years. Bus ridership recovered, but as soon as the court order expired in 2006, Metro cut bus service again to finance new rail lines. Several new light-rail lines opened between 2007 and 2016, but Metro lost five bus riders for every new rail rider.

Twin Cities Metro Transit hasn't done as poorly as some other transit agencies: its two light-rail lines gained more riders than the agency lost in bus riders. Its transit plans cater more to the politically powerful than to low-income populations, however.

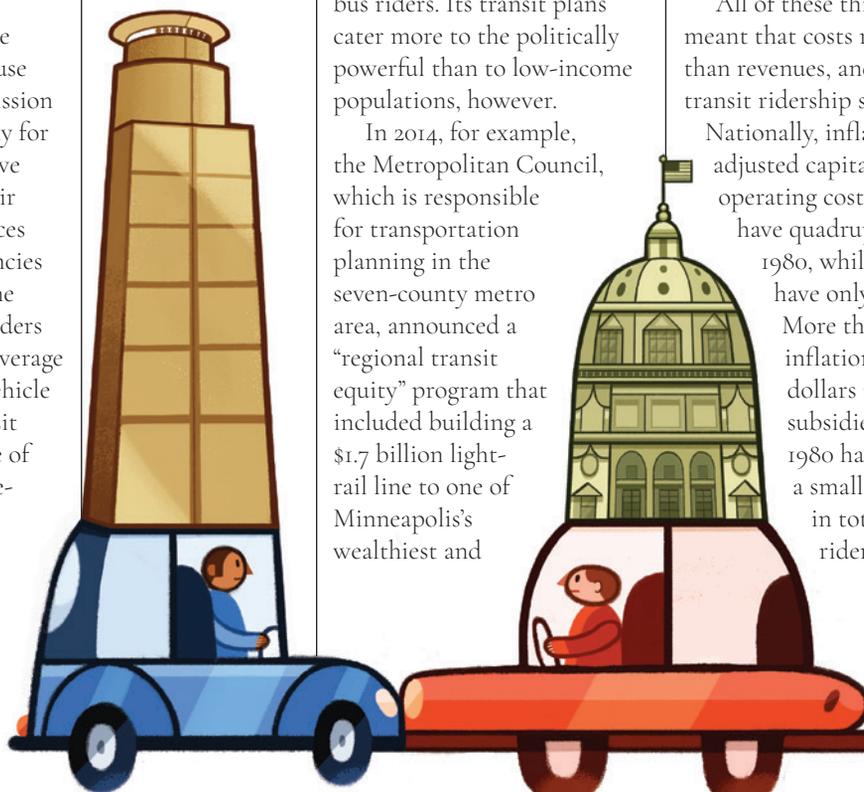
In 2014, for example, the Metropolitan Council, which is responsible for transportation planning in the seven-county metro area, announced a “regional transit equity” program that included building a \$1.7 billion light-rail line to one of Minneapolis's wealthiest and

whitest suburbs while spending a mere \$4 million on 150 bus shelters in neighborhoods of “racially concentrated poverty.” To the council, “equity” apparently means light rail for the rich; bus shelters for the poor.

Metro Transit also proudly runs the Northstar commuter train, which cost taxpayers \$317 million to start up and costs nearly \$17 million a year to operate. Yet, according to the Federal Transit Administration's National Transit Database, it carries only about 1,250 round-trip passengers each weekday. It would cost about the same (and be better for the environment) to give every daily round-trip rider \$27,000 to spend on a hybrid car every other year as to keep running this train.

All of these things meant that costs rose faster than revenues, and overall transit ridership stagnated.

Nationally, inflation-adjusted capital and operating costs per rider have quadrupled since 1980, while fares have only doubled. More than 1 trillion inflation-adjusted dollars in tax subsidies since 1980 have produced a small increase in total transit ridership, but



### THE CONCLUSION:

Privatization is the most equitable way to move people efficiently and affordably.

### THE ARGUMENTS:

- Fifty years ago, buses and trains were private and profitable.
- Subsidized public systems increase costs and decrease usage.
- Private systems thrive where customer need is greatest.
- Government contracts are prone to waste and political corruption.
- Innovation is most effective when unfettered by regulation.

urban populations grew much faster, so the average number of transit trips taken per urban resident each year declined by 23 percent. Nationwide, census data reveal that only about 5.4 percent of commuters take transit to work, down from 6.2 percent in 1980.

Evidence that government ownership is wasteful can also be found by examining the books of transit agencies that contract out their operations to private companies, usually at great savings. Denver's Regional Transit District (RTD) allows private operators to bid on half of its bus operations. In 2016, the operating cost per vehicle mile of privately run buses was just 52 percent of the cost of the buses that RTD operated itself.

This lower cost is in spite of the fact that private operators have to pay taxes that RTD is exempted from. Nor is the difference unionization, as both RTD and the private operators are unionized. Private operators simply have incentives to reduce costs because they can't rely on taxpayers to subsidize their bloated bureaucracies and inefficient practices.

**A number of examples** show that private transit can be both affordable and profitable. The Atlantic City Jitney Association was formed in 1915 and never

municipalized. The association provides service on nine different routes using 190 individually owned buses that run 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Five of the routes are free because local hotels or casinos subsidize them; the other four cost \$2.50 a ride.

The Hampton Jitney was founded in 1974 as a shared taxi service between Manhattan and the east end of Long Island. Today, the company offers first-class buses with three-across seating and plenty of legroom for 30 passengers, compared with nearly 60 on most motor coaches. The company also operates premium bus services from the Hamptons to Boston, Florida, and other locations.

Most American cities outlaw private competition with public buses, but some cities where such competition is legal have developed thriving private bus networks. Miami has had more than a dozen private operators, often charging fares lower than the public bus agency. Ford-owned Chariot competes against public buses in San Francisco and is planning to enter New York and other markets.

These private companies don't make the mistakes made by the public transit agencies. They won't spend heavily on expensive infrastructure when existing roads will do. Rather than send empty buses into neighborhoods whose residents rarely use transit, they'll provide improved service in corridors where transit usage is high. Instead of trying to socially engineer urban areas so that people will use the services public agencies provide, private operators will innovate to provide services that people want.

British privatization of bus systems in the late 1980s and rail systems in the mid-1990s spurred innovations that included the development of Megabus, which reduced costs by dispensing

with dedicated infrastructure such as ticket offices and baggage facilities. The introduction of Megabus to the United States in 2006 (including the popular route from Minneapolis to Chicago and beyond) turned around the nation's intercity bus industry, whose ridership had been declining since the 1960s. In just five years, according to a blog post on *NewGeography.com* in 2011, that ridership was growing faster than Amtrak or the airlines. A similar revitalization is needed for urban transit.

The transit industry also needs innovation, not regulation, to respond to the growing ride-sharing industry, which is already eating into transit ridership in almost every major urban area. Within a decade, driverless ride sharing in major cities is predicted to offer door-to-door travel for less than the price of a transit ride.

To survive and thrive in the coming decades, American states and cities must begin re-privatizing transit systems now. The process would save taxpayers money, improve transit service where people need it, and end the tendency to waste money for political purposes.



### RANDAL O'TOOLE

(rot@ti.org) is a senior fellow with the Cato Institute and author of *The Coming Transit Apocalypse*, as well as several books on government planning and transportation policy. Prior to working for the Cato Institute, he taught environmental economics at Yale,

the University of California at Berkeley, and Utah State University. Although he opposes all government subsidies of transportation, he is personally a rail fan and has written articles about rail history for *Minnesota History* and other publications.

# BRIDGE BUILDING 101

Politicians need to dispense with the partisan road rage and start working together

BY MARY LIZ HOLBERG

For the past 20 years, transit funding has been at the center of some of the most contentious public-policy fights in Minnesota—each with its own twists and turns and its own warriors and cheerleaders. The way these fights typically end, however, has little to do with the combatants' skills or closing arguments. The resulting decisions (or lack thereof) routinely fail to address the state's growing mobility and congestion problems. And hardly anyone manages to escape without a few political bruises and scars.

Through it all, there's been no shared vision between local governments, the legislature, the sitting governor, and the Metropolitan Council, which is responsible for transportation planning in the seven-county metro area. A long-term, comprehensive plan has yet to emerge that has adequate funding, and each time the system expands, it damages relationships between the officials who plan, fund, and operate it.

## THE CONCLUSION:

Politics as usual guarantees gridlock on our roads and at the state legislature.

## THE ARGUMENTS:

- Battles over buses and light rail have polarized lawmakers.
- Mobility issues affect everyone in Minnesota.
- Transit advocates need to consider performance standards.
- Transit skeptics need to participate in finding solutions.
- Both sides must think outside the lines and find common ground.

A series of transitways, for instance—including the Blue and Green light rail lines—has resulted in tens of millions in annual operating costs, leaving funding for bus lines severely strained and service across the rest of the transit system stagnant. The budgeting challenges that resulted left both citizens and their elected officials feeling shortchanged, leading to tensions around metro and rural needs.

To get a sense of what's needed to get off this road to nowhere, I find it helpful to look back at some of the most significant battles in a costly war that, unless stakeholders on all sides of the debate change their tactics and open their minds, promises to be perpetual.

*Round One: Hiawatha Corridor (2000).*

The clash between Gov. Jesse Ventura and Republican representative Carol Molnau, then chair of the House Transportation Finance Committee, was a rematch of sorts; the two had once faced each other in a keg-throwing contest at the Minnesota State Fair. As it turned out, Molnau could throw a keg, but she and her fellow House Republicans couldn't prevent Ventura from pushing through \$100 million for the state's first light rail line, between the Mall of America and downtown Minneapolis. This line, which would eventually be extended to Target Field, had been in the planning stages for more than 20 years.

*Round Two: Northstar Corridor (2005).* The planning phase of a proposed commuter rail line between Big Lake (located about 40 miles from the Twin Cities) and Target Field failed to meet the Cost-Benefit Standards that were required as a condition for essential federal dollars. In a futile effort to meet these basic standards, which measured the building and operating costs against the benefit to commuters, designs for the original line were shortened and stops along the route were eliminated—and even then, it took an act of Congress to ensure the federal funding. According to the National Transit Database, per-passenger subsidies each way were \$18.31 in 2014, making it one of the poorest-performing corridors in the country.

*Round Three: Central Corridor (2008).* In 2008, local funding for the Central Corridor Green Line between St. Paul's Union Depot and Target Field was settled on, but only after the DFL-controlled legislature overrode a veto by Republican governor Tim Pawlenty. The surviving bill included tax increases to fund roads and allowed the counties of the metro area to enact a quarter-percent sales tax to fund transit projects. Five of the seven counties formed the County Transit Improvement Board (CTIB) and pooled their sales taxes, nearly \$100 million per year, to account for some 30 percent of the project's cost. (Scott and Carver Counties chose not to join.) Before it was over, this battle pitted Democrats against Republicans, the governor against the legislature, and CTIB counties against non-CTIB counties.

*Round Four: Southwest Corridor (2016–2017).*

A mini drama around state transit funding dominated the end of the 2016 session. House Republicans refused to fund the Southwest Corridor in the bonding bill. Senate Democrats, who received the bonding bill from the House with less than 30 minutes before final adjournment, tried to quickly amend the bill to allow Hennepin County to foot the bill for the Southwest Corridor. But time ran out and nearly a billion dollars' worth of projects were left unfunded, including upgrades to the Minnesota Security Hospital in St. Peter, \$100 million in improvements to Minnesota colleges and universities, and more than \$300 million for road and bridge repair. As a result, politicians from both parties paid a price in the fall election. The Democrats lost the majority in the Senate, and Republicans saw their senate minority leader, David Hann from Eden Prairie, lose his seat.



In 2017, the state bonding bill that ultimately passed nearly mirrored the failed 2016 bill. This drove transit advocates to dissolve CTIB and, to help make up the difference, allow Ramsey and Hennepin Counties to double their sales-tax revenue. The 50 percent local match required to get federal funding for Southwest Corridor will now be shouldered primarily by Hennepin County.

**In the midst** of all of this tumult, I was involved in a bipartisan compromise that not only proved exceptional but also could serve as an example. Between 2002 and 2008, while I was serving as a Republican state representative from Lakeville, Rep. Frank Hornstein, a Democrat from Minneapolis, and I collaborated on the Orange Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) line.

I have a very vivid memory of meeting early in the planning process to preview a new computer simulation of the Lake Street BRT Station in the median of I-35W. The Minnesota Department of Transportation asked for our thoughts on the video. Representative Hornstein commented that it might help to add more pedestrians and bikes. I asked if they could add more trucks and SUVs to the simulation.

It was an early example of how we would work together on the project from two very different perspectives. My colleague concentrated on the positives that come from increased transit ridership. I focused on the increased capacity of the corridor for drivers. Ultimately, we were

able to get federal funds to kick-start the project planning.

The Orange BRT line, scheduled to begin full service in 2020, remains a rare win. It has continued to enjoy bipartisan support, and its phased-in implementation will provide both a high-frequency transit option and an additional freeway lane that will improve mobility for all.

In order to move forward, voters and elected officials need to start recognizing that each community and its political representatives have different needs and modes of expression. It makes sense, for instance, that core cities support priorities that enhance redevelopment and increased density and generally resist expansion of roads, since they tend to adversely impact neighborhoods.

It also makes sense that growing suburban, exurban, and rural communities do not understand why funding criteria often fail to consider *their* safety, mobility, and congestion. Frustration among those constituents builds when billions of dollars go into transit projects that require massive subsidies to serve a fraction of the population, while funding for road improvements (let alone expansion) in their communities is virtually nonexistent.

**Last year**, a transit working group at the Citizens League made mobility recommendations to the legislature. I was on the committee and was immediately concerned that it was too heavily tilted with transit supporters and failed to have folks representing greater

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*Transit solutions will require an unprecedented willingness from people on all sides to look at the issues from a different perspective than their own.*  
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Minnesota. The committee's final report reflected the majority of participants, but in my opinion it fell far short of even beginning to address the challenges ahead.

Transit and transportation issues ultimately concern every citizen in the state, and both private and public sectors from across the region must be invited into a broader conversation. This will require an unprecedented willingness for people on all sides to look at the issues from a different perspective than their own.

Transit advocates could move the conversation to a new place by considering supporting performance standards that would concentrate limited resources on routes that provide the most benefit. Lower-functioning routes might be candidates for private/public partnerships. It would also be good to recognize that road improvements and expansions for safety and mobility also benefit transit riders.

Transit naysayers could help the conversation by recognizing that there will be a growing population that will need transportation options as they age. Subsidizing transportation options mirrors other investments that can be tools for improved economic growth and access to jobs. New technologies could provide very cost-effective options. Not all transit requires the same level of subsidies.

Most important, if we are to move forward with fewer bruises and scars, it's imperative that we think outside the lines and endeavor to find a few common goals for the transportation system as a whole. It is possible to find common solutions to meet a variety of needs. We just need to put the gloves down and work to win together.



**MARY LIZ HOLBERG** is a Dakota County commissioner representing the city of Lakeville. A state representative from 1998 to 2016, she served as chair of the Civil Law, Transportation Finance, and Ways and Means committees and was widely recognized for her

work on data practices, privacy, and budget issues. Her favorite car was a 1995 White Buick Roadmaster station wagon with woodgrain sides.

# BACK & FORTH

## Questions for Laura Monn Ginsburg

Is it your position that affordable transit is a right?

**LMG:** Yes. It's especially essential given our climate and the sorts of businesses we want to stay in the area. There are great entry-level jobs in Eden Prairie and Maple Grove, for instance. But it's not always easy to take advantage of these opportunities if you don't have a vehicle or a person that can reliably take you from

A to B. So yes, in order to stay competitive and for the government to truly support a thriving community, it needs to be treated as an essential service. And while I know there are people who would disagree with me, I'd want to know why they don't think everyone deserves access to the same opportunities.

Given how divided the state legislature is on mobility issues, isn't expecting compromise in time to create a statewide plan unrealistic?

**LMG:** I am an eternal optimist, so I do believe there are ways to come together. I'm especially encouraged by what's happening in states like Utah, Texas, and Indiana, which have very Republican-heavy state legislatures. They are funding big, ambitious, expensive transit projects. And they aren't always expecting to recoup their investments, because they know it's good for business, good for the economy, and you are looking for ways to attract and maintain workers. I think that is my biggest bellwether of hope: seeing that maybe there are different ways to approach the discussion that would be compelling to a broad range of people.

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*I think that too often the word inefficient is used as a pejorative term for due process. It's important to take time for assessment and feedback and listening.*  
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How do you respond to the argument that the free market is more nimble, innovative, and efficient than the government?

**LMG:** I can't disagree that the free market in many ways is inherently more efficient. But I think that too often the word *inefficient* is used as a pejorative term for due process. It's important to take time for assessment and feedback and listening, as opposed to moving as fast as you can to find the best thing in the heat of the moment. The free market ultimately wants to sell you something. The government is better situated

to consider how something will affect everyone and everything. They have to think about things like land use, accessibility issues, equity issues, and optimizing opportunities for the end user. Companies are also very much rooted in the here and now, and what's the next quarter, and what's the next two quarters, and how much do we need to sell to meet our goals. Government planning allows for longer-term considerations.

There is a growing sense that trains and other “big-box” mobility solutions will be made obsolete by driverless cars. If that technology were destined to move us, wouldn't private enterprise be the best driver?

**LMG:** Self-driving cars are a fantastic technology, with great potential to supplement systems, but for me transit is also about environmental efficiency. And having more cars on the road to get people from their beginning-to-end destinations, instead of moving them to and from bus or train routes, doesn't seem very realistic or make much economic sense. These cars are far from a panacea when it comes to affordability, and I fail to see how individual vehicles are going to address the needs of people whose voices are often not at the table. The other thing is that these

technologies are always changing, because the free market is always innovating, which is why we need the principles of anticipatory government in place. It's one thing if another Uber or Lyft competitor comes on the market, struggles, and maybe doesn't stick around. But can we gamble with subjecting our entire market to that kind of uncertainty? Do we really want to say: “Well, you might not always be here, and there's no requirement that you provide affordable service to a broad constituency, but you're going to be a faster solution”? I just don't think that's good policy.



## Questions for Randal O'Toole

What role, if any, should government play in ensuring that people can move around?

RO: Only about 1 or 2 percent of the populace is going to ride transit to work. So even if you figure out a way to increase that a little bit, you're not going to be helping a lot of people. You should take that money and relieve the gridlock, relieve the congestion, so that people can get to work without facing congestion. Not just people who are willing to ride transit, but everybody. This is the problem: We're being forced to see this as transit versus highways.

And we should see it as, What's the most cost-effective way of relieving congestion? And the answer is never going to be transit. The answer is going to be things like coordinating traffic signals, taking care of bottlenecks, occasionally adding lanes, and using things like [express] lanes, which are already being used on some highways in the Twin Cities area. There are a lot of different ways of relieving congestion that work. Transit is not one of them.

One concern is that there's a spatial disconnect between where jobs are and where people live. Don't trains, buses, and other forms of public transit make it easier to attract and retain employees?

RO: Well, 100 years ago half the urban jobs in the country were located in a few job centers, mainly big-city downtowns—like Minneapolis and St. Paul—and transit worked because you could take people from dense residential areas to even denser job centers pretty easily. Since then, though, jobs have spread out. Today, only about 8 percent of jobs are located in big-city downtowns, and only about 20 percent more jobs are located in other job centers. The rest of the jobs are finely spread out across the landscape. So,

instead of saying, "OK, we need to have small-box transit that will take people to these jobs that are finely spread out across the landscape," transit agencies have developed big-box transit because it looks pretty. And in order to make it all work, we then try to force jobs back downtown or into other major job centers. Wait a minute. Those jobs are not going to go back downtown, they're not going to go into major job centers, and so you're building the wrong kind of transit for the cities that we have today.

What incentive does the free market have to provide affordable service to people in need?

RO: What's happened is that transit once was justified based on providing a service for people who couldn't drive, and there aren't very many of those people anymore. So now transit is justified based on getting people who can drive out of their cars, and that's a lot more expensive. If we want to provide mobility for people who

can't afford a car, the most effective way of doing that, by far, would be to give them a low-interest loan so they can buy their first used car. It turns out the data show that getting an unemployed person a car is more likely to help them get and keep a job than getting them a high school diploma if they don't have a high school diploma.

If driverless cars become the norm, though, won't that sort of technology price people out of the market?

RO: Here's the thing: Henry Ford figured out that there's a bigger market of people who don't have a lot of money than there is of people who are really rich, and so up until Henry Ford's Model Ts, most cars were made for the very rich. As of 1913, only about 4 percent of American families had a car. Henry Ford started making cars really cheap and he became a billionaire. By 1927, over half of American families had a car, and most of them were Model Ts. So, the market works for poor people much better than the political system, because the political system is dependent on who has the political power, and guess who has the political power?

Wealthy people. So, you're going to be much better off if you're low-to-moderate income if you're dealing in a market system than if you're dealing in a political system.

“  
*Getting an unemployed person a car is more likely to help them get and keep a job than getting them a high school diploma.*  
”



# BACK & FORTH



## Questions for Mary Liz Holberg

Is it fair that many might lump you in the “anti-transit” camp because, as a rule, you haven’t supported rail?

**MLH:** I believe we should invest in the most cost-effective options to get the job done. I’ve been accused of being anti-rail and anti-transit, because that’s easy for people to do. But I think that in general, and historically, Republicans in Minnesota have been termed anti-transit and not given credit for their support of bus investments.

I think the point your question is missing, though, is that I don’t believe you can separate transit from other modes of transportation. In other words, transit is about roads, too. So, if you totally segment the discussion and only talk about other forms of transit besides cars, then you’re leaving a lot of effective solutions out of the discussion.

Have you ever seen an issue involving something so many see as a public utility become this divisive?

**MLH:** No. In virtually every other funding area, different interest groups take what they can get when they can get it and come back and fight another day. And so, under one administration roads might do better, under the next trains might be better. But everything has been so hard fought that it just feels like every round has made things worse. In part I think that’s a reflection that funding levels in general are constrained. Funding for roads and transit has been lacking so long that it’s kind of like gathering around a watering hole: how the animals look at each other changes as the watering hole gets smaller. And everybody kind of feels like they have to go out for their own when there’s not enough to go around for everybody.

“  
*In virtually every other funding area, different interest groups take what they can get when they can get it and come back and fight another day.*  
”

What are the biggest misconceptions each side has of the other?

**MLH:** I get the sense that the transit supporters feel like the roads folks, for lack of a better term, don’t recognize the parts of the population that need transit systems to conduct their daily lives, that there’s no empathy or sympathy for that portion of the population that depends on transit. A misconception from the other end of the spectrum is that *all* transit is a waste of money. That somehow if you just took the money being spent on construction salaries you could

buy everybody a car. I also think there’s tension around rail-lines-as-economic-development-tools versus transportation infrastructure. From a conservative point of view it can seem like another government subsidy, and you would have a tendency to gravitate toward the idea that if it was such a good idea, businesses would help pay the price. And I think that the transit supporters don’t, in general, have problems with subsidizing economic development.

What needs to happen to move past the political gridlock? Who needs to be at the table?

**MLH:** First of all, you have to get representatives from greater Minnesota and the business community more involved. Because there are so many camps, I believe you also need a balance of transit and roads people. It would also be nice to look at the entire pot of money for transportation, roads, bridges, transit, Metro Mobility, Dial-a-Ride, et cetera. I mean there’s a whole kettle of components that make up transportation across the state. So you need a group around the table that

can fairly look at all these components and then look at some kind of meaningful distribution of funds across the board. When you have the right cross-section of people at the table, then you will have a greater understanding of what the needs are. And I would say the same thing to both sides: that there must be an attempt to find some sort of balance. Not everybody’s going to get everything they want, but most people might get what they need. There has to be a middle ground. ❄️

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# A Teacher's Guide

For educators, job satisfaction transcends  
money and makes good sense

BY LOUIS DZIERZAK

The broader discourse surrounding public education is increasingly contentious. Taxpayer frustrations regarding repeated referendums, anxieties over class sizes, and headlines bemoaning low test scores are frequent talking points on op-ed pages and at school board meetings across Minnesota. And like many of today's civic issues, debate about the best way to make systematic improvements gets bogged down in bitter disagreements over causality and cost.

Currently, teacher salaries are front and center as the Minneapolis and St. Paul school districts, both facing budget shortfalls, embark on what looks to be another round of antagonistic contract negotiations. What's likely to get short shrift in these talks, and will most certainly not be a subject of wider consideration in the accompanying media coverage, is a nuanced discussion about how teachers' job descriptions have expanded as resources have dwindled. Or what it might take, along with competitive wages, to ensure that the most talented and dedicated teachers stay engaged in the profession.

"Educators are engaged in this profession spiritually, emotionally, physically, personally, and professionally," says Nate Eklund, author of *How Was Your Day at School? Improving Dialogue About Teacher Job Satisfaction*. "They are collaboratively helping to raise other people's kids. It's possibly the most volatile environment you can work in. Even on the best day, in the most supportive environment, it's unpredictable."

Data in the 2017 *Report of Teacher Supply and Demand in Minnesota's Public Schools* show that the number of teachers leaving their positions has increased 46 percent since the 2008–09 school year. The average number of teachers who abandon the

lectern after one year is 15.1 percent, and 25.9 percent walk away after just 3 years.

"Public perceptions of the job have plummeted so far [that] fewer college students are pursuing a career in teaching," the report concludes. "The job itself is far more difficult than it was 30 years ago, with raised expectations and no real investment in supporting and developing those that choose to do it. This reality means we have a much smaller pool of teachers to choose from. The profession needs to be viewed as an honorable profession in public discourse."

To help school districts attract and retain talent, and thereby achieve better outcomes for students, Eklund founded an eponymously named consulting group. The centerpiece of the organization's work is the School Workplace Satisfaction Survey, which creates an intimate portrait of a school's culture and measures each teacher's level of job satisfaction. Employees engage in a personal inventory, answering questions like Do you feel valued and respected by your students? The administration? Your peers? And they're also invited to honestly evaluate the institution where they work. Does it support collegiality? Does it take feedback seriously? Are expectations clearly communicated?

Eklund has used the tool in more than 300 schools across the nation since 2010, and a few trends have emerged. The most notable is that a majority of teachers overwhelmingly agree with the statement "I believe teaching is an important job." But the question "Would I recommend education as a field to young people?" receives limited support.

Lynn Krepp, a senior vice president at the New Teacher Center, a national nonprofit focused on increasing teachers'

job satisfaction, explains the discrepancy. “A major influence in becoming a teacher is having an impact on the next generation. Teachers want to make a difference in the lives of children and have a positive influence in society. There’s no other role like it,” she says. “But when teachers don’t feel successful, when they don’t see student achievement and don’t feel supported, and when they feel like they are alone and fighting an uphill battle, that’s when they leave the profession.”

**Data that Eklund** has collected suggest that as school districts compete to hire teachers for their schools, salary should only be one part of the pitch. Work-environment issues like administrative support, professional development, and mentoring are becoming more influential. “People don’t go into teaching for the money,” says Monica Schroeder, an assistant superintendent at North Shore School District 112 in Highland Park, Illinois. “The more that we can show people that we are going to support them to achieve their goals, the better off we will be.”

An all-too-common symptom of an unhealthy work environment is teacher burnout, which not only leads to attrition but, perhaps more than any other human resources issue, impacts students in the classroom. Emotional exhaustion can make it harder for educators to empathize with kids, parents, and peers. This inevitably creates an environment where the adults in the room might begin to blame the kids they’ve been hired to help for their job frustrations. Ultimately, some teachers either check out entirely or begin acting out.

Eklund’s mission is to combat this cycle. His survey gives staff members, who are often hesitant to admit their exhaustion, a chance to give honest feedback to their superiors. And then protocols are put in place to bring teachers, administrators, and support staff together to talk about everything from time management to institutional values.

This methodology is in tune with what young teachers are telling prospective employers. Improved communication and resources for professional development have moved to the top of teachers’ checklists for accepting their first job or moving to a new school district. “Teaching can be a very lonely



**Teachers want to hear about mentoring, professional development, and opportunities for collaboration. They want to make sure they are coming into a trusting and supportive environment.”**

Nate Eklund, author of *How Was Your Day at School? Improving Dialogue About Teacher Job Satisfaction*

profession,” Schroeder explains. “New teachers want to hear about mentoring, professional development, and opportunities for collaboration. They want to make sure they are coming into a trusting and supportive environment.”

One of the most effective and accessible ways for school districts to improve working conditions is to provide opportunities for mentorship, both formal and informal. Sometimes giving colleagues a free period in the middle of the day does wonders. Other times, a more formal program is warranted. Whatever the case, when employees are given the time and encouragement to co-plan curriculum, co-create strategies for tough students, and just generally bounce ideas off each other, they report higher levels of job satisfaction and their employers benefit from higher rates of retention.

“It’s not just a buddy person there for emotional support. It’s someone who is there to help that teacher think about what they are doing instructionally,” Krepp says. “Teachers who stay have mentors who have received professional training, [mentors] who have tools and protocols to formatively help them assess and build their [own] practices.”

Experience also tells Krepp and Eklund that a supportive culture works best when it starts from the top. This includes having superintendents and principals that set a common vision and then reach out to staff for feedback. It also helps if everyone involved can accept criticism and always keep in mind that improved student achievement is the end goal. “You can’t just say let’s all get along and be nice. You have to enact that with supporting structures, coaching, and feedback to help people live in that vision,” Krepp says.

“We’re not going to buy ourselves out of the problem,” concludes Eklund, who joshes that he won’t rest until a magazine like *Minnesota Monthly* names a public school one of the Top 20 Employers in the Twin Cities. “Increasing salaries is not a monolithic lever that we can pull that will transform schools as workplaces. The question is How do we create and support a healthy environment where school districts actively compete to be better places to work?”

**LOUIS DZIERZAK** is a full-time freelance writer living in Richfield, Minnesota. Raising four children, he always has education-related issues top of mind.



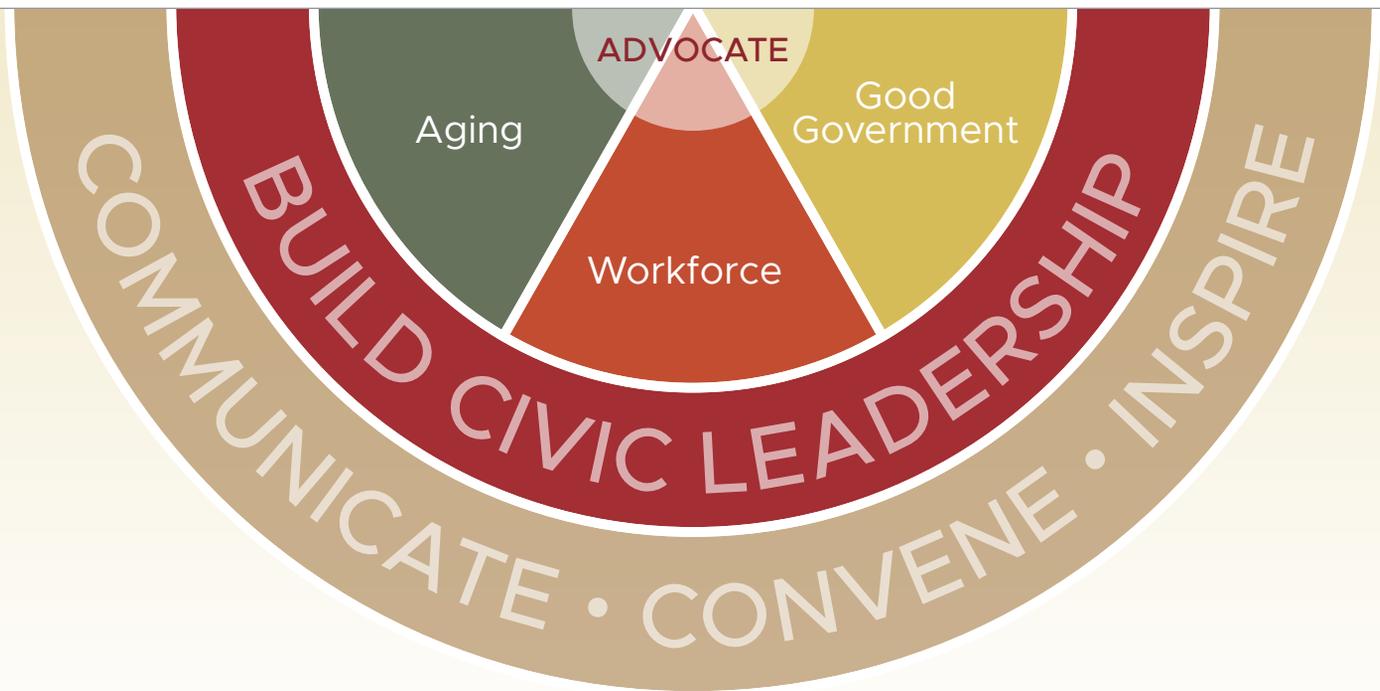
# Vision Quest

A dynamic strategic plan ensures that the Citizens League’s mission will resonate for Minnesotans in 2018 and beyond

**A**t the Citizens League, the past is prologue. In 2017, the organization continued its 65-year-old pledge to create bipartisan energy around issues that affect all Minnesotans, including transit funding, property taxes, the aging workforce, and education. Committees and working groups were convened that, true to the League’s overall mission, honored a diversity of opinion and lived experience. Public events across the state—Policy and a Pint®, EDTalks, Mind the

Gap, and the annual Civic Celebration—proved both inspirational and informative.

As the 2018 legislative session picks up steam and the national political conversation remains equal parts shrill and shallow, the need for a pragmatic, regional arbiter committed to inclusion and forward motion is greater than ever—which is why the Citizens League’s board of directors recently engaged in a period of discernment to create a template for the nonprofit’s short- and long-term goals.



## AGING

**The demographics are undeniable.** Between 2000 and 2030, according to the Minnesota Department of Health, those age 65 and older will increase from 12 percent of the state’s population to 24 percent (or about one in every four Minnesotans). Despite this reality, most people avoid the subject, and important discussions about health care, housing needs, transportation, and finances get put on the back burner.

In 2017, in an effort to create a safe, productive gathering place for individuals and families to talk about the aging process, the Citizens League launched the

Calling Home website ([www.callinghomemn.org](http://www.callinghomemn.org)). The idea driving the initiative is that conversations about what “home” has meant, means, and will mean to people can be a starting place for intergenerational conversations about planning for the future. And the website serves as a digital toolkit to help Minnesotans navigate choices.

“We realized that housing was a way in for a lot of people,” says Citizens League board member Bob Butterbrodt, who explains that Calling Home evolved after years of study and collaboration with a dozen aging-related organizations. “We asked people if it was important for them

to stay in their home. If not, what would home look like to them? We gathered a lot of insights that way.”

Calling Home and associated programming will evolve in phases; for 2018, there’s a plan to build out learning areas that focus on the theme of health and wellness. Other areas of concentration will follow, informed by both expert opinion and the feedback of participants, Butterbrodt says. “There are a lot of great ideas out there, and we will continue to work with our partners on finding the right formula of messaging and content to motivate people to action.”

## WORKFORCE

“There is a perfect storm happening in Minnesota right now,” says Citizens League board member Cyndi Leshner. “The way things are trending, the state is soon going to have a significant workforce shortage. This is due to a number of factors, from the aging of the population to the rise of new entrants into the workforce. There’s a disconnect between education and job training, and we’re trying to fix that.”

In an effort to anticipate the changing labor landscape, the League has led efforts to remove barriers that prevent the recruitment and retention of a skilled workforce.

In 2017, for instance, the organization advocated at the legislature to encourage schools to provide kids equal access to postsecondary options and opportunities. Among other things, the legislation that resulted makes it easier for students to prepare themselves for entering the job market. “A trained workforce can better meet employer needs, even as these needs evolve. Our goal is to help inform the process all the way through education to job placement by assessing such things as how students move through the system and get credentials and certification,” Leshner says.

There are a number of other workforce-related proposals in motion for 2018 that the League is positioned to champion, including collaborating with education and workforce advocacy groups to increase the percentage of Minnesotans age 25 to 44 who have a postsecondary degree.

## GOOD GOVERNMENT

Citizens League board member Pat Born believes that good government is in the Citizens League’s marrow. “We’ve played a role in advocating for good government in Minnesota for over 60 years,” Born says. “We are regularly asked by governments to hold and run forums on a topic that they just can’t manage themselves.”

By convening politically balanced study committees, the League is able to craft policy papers for various governing bodies that are as imaginative as they are workable. To transcend party affiliations and a horse-race mentality, each carefully vetted cohort is empowered to combine solid research and strong anecdotal evidence and to compromise. (In 2017, for instance, both the *Star Tribune* and *Pioneer Press* were moved by the final recommendations of a 21-member study committee convened to look at transit through the lens of governance, policy, and funding.)

“We have an impressive record of getting buy-in from influencers when we choose to study an issue. They wouldn’t do that if they thought it was a waste of time,” Born says. “The key is to create the right environment. Once you do that, good things happen.

“We get stakeholders from all sides of an issue who in other settings would be at each other’s throat, arguing with each other and scoring points through the media, who agree to come together and sit across a table and listen to each other. That happens time and again. People know when they join a committee or work group of ours that we are there to reason with each other in a civilized, constructive way. There’s just no replacing that.”

## Building Civic Leadership

No matter the specific programming initiatives, the Citizens League’s long-term intention is to tap into the passion and commitment of every person with whom it comes into contact. The hope is that, along the way, the people who interact with various programs will go on to model civil discourse and encourage inquisitiveness among their friends, neighbors, and elected representatives.

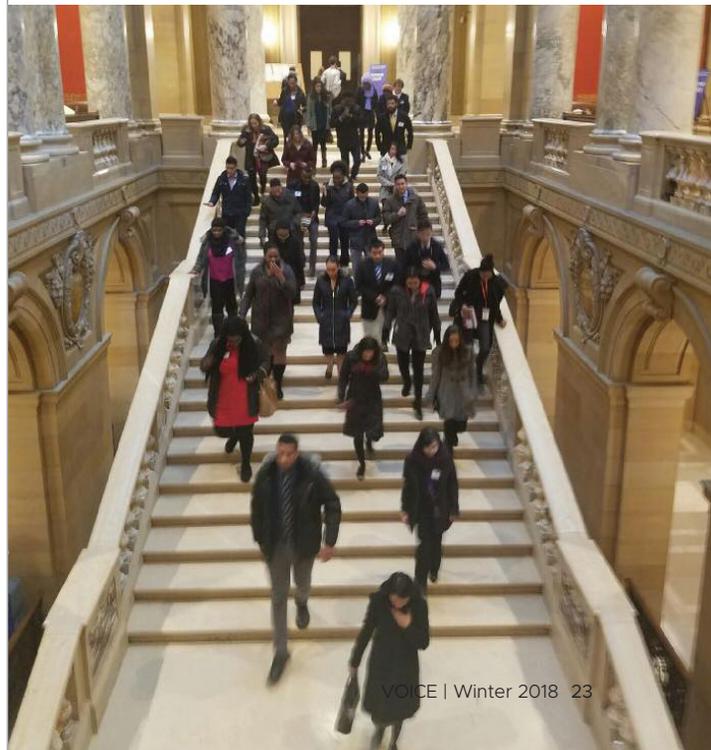
This overriding aim—to build an ever-expanding roster of civic champions—is also buttressed by specific leadership-building projects, such as Minnesota Capitol Pathways. The program, now entering its third year, provides paid internships at the state capitol to college students of color. Participants build relationships with established capitol leaders, gain exposure to various kinds of careers in policy, and build a strong professional résumé in the process.

“Through Capitol Pathways, we can help break down barriers for young leaders of color and help them realize this could be a career path for them,” explains Citizens League board member Jim Nikolai. “We want their voices represented in public life.”

The League will also continue supporting the Amherst H. Wilder Foundation’s Community Equity Pipeline and Nexus Community Partners’ Boards and Commissions Leadership Institute, which provide training for mid-career professionals of color. “People are craving leaders who are willing to step up and take on challenges,” Nikolai says. “If we can help create a spark in young people to become those leaders, we will have done the state a great service.”

—ADAM WAHLBERG

The Minnesota Capitol Pathways cohort walks the hallways of the newly renovated state capitol on December 1, 2017.





Far too many people are going to college unprepared, not completing, and ending up with a lot of debt and nothing to show for it.

—**Stephen Smith**, executive editor, American RadioWorks

“Class Dismissed: Unlearning Our Notions about Higher Ed” • May 2014

What the native bees need is flowering throughout the season. If you had a 10-foot-by-10-foot patch in your backyard, you’d make a difference.

—**Gary Reuter**, scientist, U of M Bee Lab

“Bringing Back the Bees” • April 2014

We’ve lost an amount of prairie equal to the size of Indiana—in just the Dakotas and Minnesota—since 2008.

—**Dara Moskowitz Grumdahl**, food writer, *Mpls.St.Paul Magazine*

“Bringing Back the Bees” • April 2014

We need allies to join our movement to make sure that legislators and others understand the need to continue to build our system. We need to make sure people have better access to care and treatment so they can live full lives.

—**Sue Aberholden**, executive director of Minnesota NAMI

“Moving Our Mental Health System Forward” • Oct. 2016

## Happy Hours for a Healthy Democracy

It was standing room only at Amsterdam Bar and Hall in downtown St. Paul on a typically brisk November evening in 2014, and the venue’s all-ages crowd was abuzz. Three-pieced businesspeople chatted with tattooed entrepreneurs. Urban activists mingled with suburban moderates. College students camped out at tables near the stage. Everyone seemed primed for things to get started.

Finally, after plenty of time for a beer run or three, Steve Seel, then a host and producer at Minnesota Public Radio’s rock ‘n’ roll juggernaut 89.3 The Current, grabbed the mic to introduce the evening’s entertainment. There would be no new underground band or fledgling singer-songwriter onstage this night, however. Instead, the DJ introduced a credentialed, three-person panel that had been brought together to share their perspectives on the economic, social, and medical changes that accompany the aging process.

“How do we have services in the community that are easy to access?” panelist Eric Schubert, vice president of the senior housing and services provider Ecumen, asked the room. “And prepare for an aging population and not just leave people as orphans in their homes?”

It was the sort of intellectually nourishing evening the Citizens League and MPR had hoped for a decade ago, when they began imagining how to engage diverse audiences in the day’s most pressing issues. Instead of just another evening in a classroom or lecture hall populated by talking heads and predictable talking

points, however, the planners behind Policy and a Pint® made it their mission to create a safe, inviting place to digest facts, exchange opinions, and access a sense of purpose and community.

“The Current’s audience is engaged, informed, and involved with their community, and Policy and a Pint gives them a space to get important information about the topics truly shaping and impacting their lives, says Ali Lozoff, director of the 50th Anniversary for MPR and one of those original planners. “And it’s in a format that works for them, with a more casual, informal tone that still takes the issues seriously.”

The 60- to 90-minute programs, which take place six times a year and often sell out, address a range of issues facing average Minnesotans, such as the state’s mental-health care system, the region’s changing transportation infrastructure, and the future of public education. Thanks to the support of Target and the Bush Foundation, plans are already under way for 2018 (check out [citizensleague.org/events](http://citizensleague.org/events) for upcoming engagements), and MPR will continue to stream recordings of the events at [thecurrent.org](http://thecurrent.org).

Admission is just \$10 (\$5 for students), the appetizers are complimentary, and the cash bar is open from pre-curtain to final comments. So those who want to join in the search for solutions to some of today’s most puzzling policy questions should bring a thirst for knowledge along with an open mind, and plan to make some new friends.

—**JACOB TAINTOR**



## WINTER 2018

### JANUARY

- 16 MIND OPENER (BREAKFAST)  
Downtowner Woodfire Grill, St. Paul, 7:30 a.m.

### FEBRUARY

- 13 MIND THE GAP  
Minneapolis Event Centers, St. Anthony Main, Minneapolis, 5:30 p.m.
- 16 CAPITOL PATHWAYS SOCIAL HOUR  
Ladyslipper Room at Centennial Building, St. Paul, 4:30 p.m.

- 20 MIND OPENER (BREAKFAST)  
Downtowner Woodfire Grill, St. Paul, 7:30 a.m.

- 26 EDTALKS: RETHINKING DISCIPLINE  
Icehouse, Minneapolis, 5:30 p.m.

### MARCH

- 16 CAPITOL PATHWAYS SOCIAL HOUR  
Ladyslipper Room at Centennial Building, St. Paul, 4:30 p.m.
- 20 MIND OPENER (BREAKFAST)  
Downtowner Woodfire Grill, St. Paul, 7:30 a.m.
- 27 MIND THE GAP  
Minneapolis Event Centers, St. Anthony Main, Minneapolis, 5:30 p.m.

## TALK TO US

We'd love to hear what you think about the articles, ideas, and mission of *Citizens League Voice*.

**Email:** [editor@citizensleague.org](mailto:editor@citizensleague.org)

**Write to:** Editor, *Citizens League Voice*  
400 North Robert Street  
Suite 1820  
St. Paul, MN 55101

Include name, address, daytime phone, and email. Correspondence may be edited for length and clarity.

## CURRENT EVENT SERIES

We organize the following event series to inform and engage Minnesotans on important policy topics.

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*Multiple Sponsors*

The Citizens League's annual, bipartisan event celebrates the accomplishments of community leaders from around Minnesota.

### EDTALKS

*Sponsored by the Bush Foundation and the Verne C. Johnson Family Foundation*

Based on the TED Talks model, this dynamic happy hour features short, thought-provoking talks on an ever-widening range of subjects involving public education and the young. A lively Q&A rounds out the evening.

### MIND THE GAP

*Sponsored by Comcast and RBC Wealth Management (Darla Kashian)*

Opening to rave reviews in May 2017, this new event series focuses on filling gaps in knowledge and understanding to examine what might be possible when invested community members gather to share their unique perspectives on a range of issues.

### MIND OPENER

*Sponsored by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota*

In-depth policy discussions served with breakfast give participants a chance to go to school on a variety of issues, from the electrical grid to opioid use to Minnesota's changing political landscape. Space is limited.

### POLICY AND A PINT®

*Sponsored by the Bush Foundation and Target*

Grab a beverage and get ready to hear substantive, lively conversations about public policy in Minnesota. Copresented with 89.3 The Current, the event series endeavors to broaden understanding beyond the headlines.

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## Energizing Impact: How can private investment spur clean energy for all?

Individuals, foundations, and other private investors are increasingly looking to make an impact as well as a profit with their resources. Join Fresh Energy for a conversation with Susan Hammel, an impact investment expert currently serving as the executive in residence at the Minnesota Council on Foundations, and Sandhya Murali, who is putting dollars to work increasing access to community solar as CFO and co-founder of Solstice in Massachusetts. Together, we will discuss the critical role that private investment can play in ensuring clean energy for all.

Tuesday, January 30, 2018

7:00 - 8:30 AM / CST

**REGISTER:** [bit.ly/energizingimpact](http://bit.ly/energizingimpact)

Town and Country Club

300 North Mississippi River Boulevard

Saint Paul, MN 55104



**SANDHYA MURALI** is the CFO and co-founder at Solstice, an award-winning social enterprise dedicated to expanding access to clean energy to all Americans, where she manages business and product development. Prior to joining Solstice, she worked at Barclays' investment banking division in New York and London, advising on and executing public equity transactions for Technology, Media and Telecom companies, and was deeply involved in Barclays' philanthropy work with Endeavor, Women's World Banking, and Barclays' Social Innovation Fund.



**SUSAN HAMMEL, CFA** is the founder of Cogent Consulting Inc., an independent, Minneapolis-based strategic, financial, and impact investing consultant serving nonprofit and for-profit purpose-driven organizations which focus on making a tangible social impact. Long a leader in impactful philanthropy beginning with the Prudential Foundation, Susan is an experienced, results-oriented executive serving as executive in residence with the Minnesota Council on Foundations. She has also served as executive director of the Delta Dental of Minnesota Foundation and CFO for Ashoka: Innovators for the Public.

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### ABOUT FRESH ENERGY

Fresh Energy is a nonprofit organization working toward an economy we thrive in and energy that ensures our well being.