



Anoka County

COUNTY ADMINISTRATION

Respectful, Innovative, Fiscally Responsible

Rhonda Sivarajah
Chair, District #6

February 8, 2016

Dear Council Member:

We are part of a coalition of county and city leaders from the suburban metropolitan area who have become increasingly concerned with a lack of accountability from the Metropolitan Council, especially as its scope of authority and involvement in regional issues continue to expand. It is our belief that an updated Metropolitan Council governance structure, one that makes the Council accountable to the regional constituency of those impacted by its decisions, would benefit this region greatly. We seek your support for the attached principles for reform that would increase local participation and collaboration to help guide orderly growth and economic development in our region.

We ask that you adopt the attached resolution calling for substantive change to the Council.

Structure Limits Local Representation

Metropolitan Council members are non-elected individuals answerable only to the Governor, an office that has often been elected without majority support from metropolitan-area voters. We believe the Council, which has the ability to levy taxes on metropolitan-area residents, should be answerable to the citizens and taxpayers of the area it represents rather than a single officeholder and should feature strong county representation and representation from other local elected officials. This call for reform echoes the 2011 conclusion of the nonpartisan Office of the Legislative Auditor. In the evaluation report *Governance of Transit in the Twin Cities Region*, Legislative Auditor Nobles recommended a Council with a mix of gubernatorial appointees and elected officials from the region.

Substantial Changes in Role of Council Since 1967

The Metropolitan Council was established in 1967 to provide regional planning services for the Twin Cities area. However, at the same time the Council's management of growth, and in particular its coordination of regional services, has changed dramatically. The Council's scope has increased, but not its level of accountability to the local governments and citizens of the metropolitan area. Many citizens and local government officials feel disconnected from the present Metropolitan Council, undermining its credibility and preventing it from functioning as an effective regional governance body.

In closing, we hope you will join us in our call for reform by adopting the attached resolution with principles to strengthen regional planning and development. We welcome the opportunity to meet with you and your colleagues to present this and discuss further. Please contact Claire Pritchard at 651-438-4540 (or at Claire.Pritchard@co.dakota.mn.us) for more information or to schedule a presentation by an elected official to your Council or Board. We look forward to working with you in this effort to unite the region for continued growth and prosperity.

Please make every effort to return the adopted resolution to Claire.Pritchard@co.dakota.mn.us by Tuesday, March 8, or as early as possible given your approval process.

Sincerely,

Rhonda Sivarajah, Chair
Anoka County Board of Commissioner

Brian Kirkham
Bethel City Council

Jeff Reinert
Mayor, Lino Lakes