

November 6, 2008

The Honorable Chairman Peter Bell  
Metropolitan Council  
390 Robert St. North  
St. Paul, MN 55101-1805

RE: City of Minneapolis Comments on Draft 2030 Transportation Policy Plan Update

Dear Chairman Bell:

We thank the Metropolitan Council for this opportunity to comment on the Draft 2030 Transportation Policy Plan Update. The attached document was compiled by staff and policy makers at the City of Minneapolis and approved by our Transportation and Public Works Committee on November 6, 2008.

The City of Minneapolis is currently completing updates to our comprehensive plan, "The Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth." The transportation section promotes a vibrant multi modal city. Our Plan for Sustainable Growth emphasizes walking and biking as modal options within a balanced system. It acknowledges that increased transit service and options are vital to our growth.

In our region we have recently experienced a number of transportation challenges and opportunities that have changed our approach to investment. Notably, the success of the Urban Partnership Agreement, the award of the federal Non-motorized Transportation Project demonstration grant, and the response the 35W bridge collapse have prepared this region for renewed energy and innovation. The City of Minneapolis supports a cooperative and regional approach to transportation and transit investment.

Sincerely,

Steven A. Kotke, P.E.  
City Engineer, Director of Public Works

**City of Minneapolis**  
**Comments for Metropolitan Council on**  
**Draft 2030 Transportation Policy Plan Update**

**OVERALL COMMENTS:**

The City of Minneapolis appreciates the efforts of Metropolitan Council staff and committees that went in to preparation of the 2030 Transportation Policy Plan. The City of Minneapolis supports the general direction of the TPP.

The City of Minneapolis supports the 'low cost – high impact' approach to investment. This represents an acknowledgement of the limited resources in our region and the need to prioritize the preservation and safety of the existing system.

The City of Minneapolis cautions against separating the vision of the highway system from the transit/transitways vision. All aspects of planning and implementation should stress a multi-modal approach.

The City of Minneapolis is very supportive of the TPP's "realistic, innovative and focused" approach to a Regional Transportation Strategy, with an emphasis on innovation and flexibility going forward.

It is important for the Council to identify sources of transit funding at all levels of government. The Council needs to act as an advocate for these funds. The region needs to be competitive at the federal level. Well developed project and funding plans will accomplish this.

Transit and rail projects like Southwest corridor, Bottineau corridor and 35W BRT should be given specific target dates for completion.

Throughout the Plan, the Council should set goals and strategies to meet them. Whether these goals are for mode share, greenhouse gas emissions or congestion reduction they should be specifically stated and supported with strategies.

It is our understanding that the Aviation element of the TPP is essentially a placeholder. The City of Minneapolis reserves its comments on the aviation elements of the TPP until after the Aviation System Plan Update draft is available for comment and review.

## **SPECIFIC COMMENTS:**

The City of Minneapolis offers the following specific comments on the draft TPP:

### **Chapter 2: Policies and Strategies**

Most policy and strategy comments are under the respective chapter heading, with the exception of the following strategies which are only discussed in Chapter 2:

- Strategy 5b, Passenger Rail and Bus Connections, should explicitly reference *inter-city* passenger rail
- Strategy 8a, Reduction of Transportation Emissions: The Council should set specific goals for reduction of green house gas emissions and recommend simple, low cost strategies to meet them, like reducing idling of transit fleet. All projects should describe how they contribute to improved air quality.

### **Chapter 3: Regional Transportation Finance**

- Strategy 2c, Transit Capital and Operating Investments: It is in the interest of the region to accelerate the transit ridership goals if possible. The region has already achieved a 20% ridership growth, toward the 2020 goal of a 50% increase.

### **Chapter 4: Transportation and Land Use**

- Strategy 4f, Local Transportation Planning: The Metropolitan Council should require and support local planning in the areas of transit, bikes and pedestrians.

### **Chapter 6: Highways**

- Strategy 9b, Multimodal System, should reference a multimodal *transportation* system rather than a roadway system to reflect the fact that some elements of the multimodal system are non-roadway based.
- The Plan should reflect that the I-35W Bridge over the Mississippi River *has re-opened* in the fall of 2008.
- Table 6-36: I-35W at Washington Avenue, Project Status says, “Will be addressed with new I-35W Bridge.” Has this work been completed?

### **Chapter 7: Transit**

- Transit Types of Service – LRT is described as “operating in an exclusive right-of-way.” While this is generally true, there are locations where the right-of-way is not exclusive.

- Transit Types of Service – Commuter rail is described as having stops “approximately five miles apart” and “typically operate only in morning and evening commute periods.” Many commuter rail lines including the Northstar line have stops much farther apart than five miles and many, including Northstar, have mid-day service as well.
- Transit Infrastructure – Should reference the new multimodal station being constructed near the Twins Ballpark.
- Strategy 13d, Transit Technologies: The Council should also explore and support technology that promotes seamless, interoperable fare cards that could be used for related transportation purposes like parking fees.
- Strategy 13e, Transit Safety and Security – This strategy should specifically address the need for transit safety and security both on transit vehicles and at transit stops. Real and perceived personal security at transit stops and on transit vehicles is a significant deterrent to transit usage. In addition, the City believes that effective urban design can contribute to transit safety and security and the strategy should reflect this.
- Strategy 15b, Criteria for Transitway Selection: Transitway selection should also consider a project’s connections to the regional system and its extending new service to underserved areas.
- Strategy 15D, Transitway Coordination, should specifically reference “pedestrian *and bicycle* facilities...”
- Metro Transit’s high-frequency network is not mentioned in the plan. These are routes within the arterial bus network which have a much higher frequency of service than the arterial bus network. The high-frequency network should be identified as a fifth type of the regular route bus system in addition to local routes, arterial routes, express routes and long-distance express routes.
- The plan should include a map and more information about facilities on the high frequency arterial bus network – bus stops and bus shelters. These corridors provide a very high proportion of regional transit ridership, and their facilities (bus stops, bus shelters, and street/sidewalk corridors) are given very little attention, compared with the focus upon park-n-ride facilities.
- The plan does not recognize the fact that the major local bus corridors in Minneapolis provide the majority of ridership for the regional transit system. The role of the major urban arterial bus routes in helping the region to meet its goal of a doubling of transit ridership by 2030 should be explained (the primary transit network/high-frequency routes, such as Nicollet, Chicago, etc.) The bias in the plan appears to be that all the increase in ridership will come from suburban

express routes. How do these arterial routes relate to future plans for the regional transitways?

- There should be more information about the plans for future transit centers; they are currently shown on the map on page 118, but unlike for park-n-ride facilities, there is no information about the schedule for constructing them.
- The plan should more strongly support development of intercity passenger rail. While this may not be specifically under the Metro Council's jurisdiction, the City believes that it is a vital component to the multi-modal transportation system and should be supported in the regional plan.
- Bus Rapid Transit: The statement the BRT is never "complete" like a rail project is inaccurate. Upgrades to various components of the rail transit system are also implemented. This statement should be deleted.
- The statement on page 128 that "the Midtown Corridor should be examined after Southwest Transitway is completed to see if a connection between Hiawatha and Southwest is warranted" should be clarified so that the Midtown Corridor may be examined after the Southwest Transitway locally preferred alternative is adopted by the Metropolitan Council, not after the Southwest Transitway is constructed..
- The paragraph on streetcars does not recognize the benefits of streetcar service for transit riders, as well as for development. The City recommends the following language edits related to streetcars:

**Streetcars** are a type of rail transit that can be operated with vintage cars, replica cars or modern cars. Streetcars typically operate in mixed traffic although they may operate in reserved lanes and may be given priority at intersections and as such, are subject to the same problems of congestion as travel in automobiles. They typically stop every few blocks and operate shorter distances than LRT with an emphasis on high frequency service with high accessibility. They travel more slowly than light-rail transit, which operates in its own dedicated right-of-way and stops every one-two miles, one miles, and bus service, which also typically service much longer routes. Service is often faster than bus service due to faster boarding, faster fare collection, and intersection priorities. Streetcar service is particularly suitable for high volume local routes in urban areas. ~~However,~~ Streetcars may also be appropriate as a development tool for local units of government. The Council will collaborate with local units of government to determine where and when streetcars may be appropriate. However, if it is determined that streetcars are less cost-effective than buses or and they are being constructed primarily as a development tool, streetcars should be funded primarily at the local, not regional, level. If streetcar service would replace bus service, then regional participation would be based on the anticipated regional benefits. Federal or state grant funding for local streetcar lines should not compete with regional transit priorities unless streetcar is shown to be more cost-effective than bus or LRT if buses or light rail transit are more cost efficient than streetcars.

- Transit Implementation Costs: This section includes the statement, “It is assumed that only one New Starts project is under construction at a time.” What is the rationale for this statement? The Southwest Transitway currently has a target opening year of 2015, one year after opening of the Central Corridor LRT. If the Southwest Transitway is to meet its goal, it would require that both corridors be under construction at the same time.

## **Chapter 9: Pedestrians and Bicyclists**

- Policy 18c, Local Planning for Bicycling and Walking: The Council should set expectations and goals for local units of government to incorporate bicycle and pedestrian planning into their local planning efforts. This puts the region in a competitive position for additional federal funds to promote walking and biking.
- Multi-Modal Projects. This includes the statement that “evaluation criteria will favor *highway* projects that accommodate...” The word *highway* should be changed to transportation or roadway to be more general in nature.