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Metropolitan Governance Task Force listening session

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Thank you to the members of the task force for accepting the daunting task of reviewing the structure and mandate of the Met Council and submitting reform suggestions to the legislature.

Also daunting is the fact that the Metropolitan Council oversees 5 regional issues that overwhelmingly define the quality of life and livability for those who live and work within the 7-county metro area.

With that in mind, the following two statements are found on the **What We Do** page of the Metropolitan Council's website:

Our governing body, the 17-member Metropolitan Council, plays a key convening role, bringing together communities to develop policies and a shared vision and direction for the region.

*Our **Public Engagement Plan (updated 2015)** establishes principles and processes for public engagement to ground Met Council decisions in the needs of community stakeholders and to engage people in the decision-making process.*

The Public Engagement Plan expands on the following governing principles that the council and staff aim to keep front and center as they conduct their work:

- | | |
|-----------------|------------------------|
| 1. Equity | 5. Accountability |
| 2. Respect | 6. Collaboration |
| 3. Transparency | 7. Inclusion |
| 4. Relevance | 8. Cultural Competence |

There is also a 2022 Transportation addendum to the plan that may have been drawn up by the council to address the public outcry about the project problems that resulted from the council's failure to follow their governing principles in the SWLRT project. Unfortunately, by 2022 it was considered too late, and/or there was a lack of will, to be accountable to the public for project problems that had been predicted and expressed by the public during early project planning hearings. As predictions came true during construction, the council lost both its credibility and the people's trust.

I do not conclude that the estrangement between the public and the council was due solely to their incompetence or irresponsibility. The council's work is vast and complex, perhaps exceeding what can be successfully overseen by the current structure. It is the essential work of the task force to investigate that possibility.

Looking ahead, and considering what we know at this point in the task force's review, I believe that the Met Council members should be elected rather than appointed by the Governor. The campaign process will bring the council members and their work into the light of day, providing them the opportunity to gain the support and trust of the people they serve.

May the reform suggestions drawn up by the task force contribute to the creation of a metropolitan planning structure that is designed and equipped to tackle the evolving metro area challenges and opportunities ahead.

Thank you.