

Ted Kolderie

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Dear Representative Hornstein:

I'll sharpen here, as I should have last Friday, the things you mainly want to know: What the Legislature should now do about the Metropolitan Council.

1. Do make the Metropolitan Council elective.

The Council's essential function is to bring to the Legislature the local agreement legislators need in order for the state to act on twin cities regional problems. It isn't local when it's an arm of state government.

The original Council was sufficiently local that in the 1969 session it worked. After six years of frustrating disagreement its proposal enabled the Legislature to solve the groundwater contamination problem.

If direct-election doesn't pass now, create districts each consisting of two Senate districts and provide that the six legislators will either 'elect' the member for that district or recommend to the governor the person to be appointed.

2. Do not allow a 'council of governments'.

Tried nationally, that approach to regional development did not work. The CoGs proved to be 'paper mills'; local officials routinely approving applications for federal aid submitted by local units. The whole arrangement was shut down by the national administration in 1981.

An elected official is a person elected to the seat in which s/he is voting.

3. Get the Metro Council out of 'operations'.

The 1994 legislation making it an 'operating body' is responsible for the dreadful situation today with transit. The Council has had to implement the

'system decision' for rail made by the counties. The arrangement for policy and operations the Legislature originally designed has been turned upside down.

Get the Council back to being the architect and general contractor on the job of regional development. Let the Department of Transportation, or a re-created Metropolitan Transit Commission, run transit . . . and build the light-rail if that is the concept of transit the Legislature wishes to continue.

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It is good to look back to the beginning; to the arrangement the Legislature initially created. That lets us see what worked and what did not.

You have an opportunity now to make the metropolitan arrangement work again. And, I believe, to strengthen the role of the Legislature in the process.

Sincerely,

Ted Kolderie