

Metropolitan Governance Task Force - 1/5/24

As a homeowner and resident of Minneapolis' North Loop, it is extremely evident to me that the Met Council as it stands is broken. When I think of one person (the governor) appointing a body to make decisions on behalf of the residents and taxpayers, it makes me think of the fiefdoms of northern Europe that my ancestors fled for a better life here in the U.S.

Without accountability to the communities they serve, Met Councilmembers are free to destroy neighborhoods, wastefully spend our hard-earned tax dollars, and push pet projects that are not justified.

Like other leaders in our Democracy the members of the Met Council should be elected by those they serve. There is a reason we the citizens elect city, state, federal, and other leaders. It keeps them accountable to us.

As is evident by the southwest light rail extension, the Met Council disregards those who know their communities best. When concerns about the route and project were brought up by community members the Met Council blatantly disregarded them and now, we taxpayers are stuck footing the bill. \$2.74 billion, \$480 per Minnesota resident spent because the Met Council wouldn't listen.

We continue to see their lack of concern for the residents impacted by their authoritarian decisions. The nearly 20-year-old plan of a blue line Light Rail extension to Brooklyn Park has plowed forward with many different iterations that deviate far from the initial plan. 20 years ago, we did not have Smartphones, Ridesharing apps, Electric Cars, Electric Busses, scooters, the list goes on, yet the Met Council refuses to explore all options and maintains the antiquated plan for expensive light rail.

When they didn't initially listen to residents and chose the Lyn Park route, they nearly destroyed a thriving diverse community. When that plan fell apart, they moved to West Broadway and plan to demolish 24 buildings: 14 BIPOC Small Businesses and 10 Homes. In my community of the North Loop, they are planning on running light rail trains as close as 15 feet from our bedroom windows. Completely disregarding our privacy and the risk of damage to our 100-year-old historic building. The Met Council has not learned.

What is clearly evident is that the Met Council as it stands cares about nothing other than completing a project, continually dismissing residents' concerns and wastefully throwing our hard-earned money at the problems their lack of accountability continues to create. They do not care for the wellbeing of the neighborhoods their decisions affect.

While I understand that this Task Force does not have direct input on current and future projects, I do know that many of the members who sit before me and guests here today have the capability to keep our leaders accountable. The damage that can be caused by unaccountable transit decisions is evident. Southwest Light Rail, Rondo; We see these in the news regularly.

For historical reference I bring up the once planned I-335 interstate connection. In 1964 the US Department of Transportation decided to approve an interstate connection through what are now the thriving and vibrant neighborhoods of the North Loop and Northeast. This was a decision made without community input and by those with no accountability to the residents.

The project moved forward with purchasing land and demolishing houses. Luckily for us, the public outcry about the destruction of these neighborhoods persuaded Senator Mondale, Representative Fraser, and the Minneapolis City Council to withdraw support for the project. They were all accountable to residents, the Met Council as it stands is not.

Had that interstate been built, the Historic former Lavoris Mouthwash factory that I have called home for the past 10 years and many other buildings would have been destroyed. The vibrant, diverse, and energized neighborhoods we all enjoy would not exist today had that project succeeded.

It is with this precedent that we as residents, homeowners, taxpayers, and community members request that the accountability start now, the proposed Blue Line Light Rail extension in its current iteration be halted, and that new innovative and flexible solutions like electric bus rapid transit be explored. Our communities, residents, and state deserve this.

And most importantly the Met Council must be accountable to us. Not the governor. Not one singular person. ALL of us.

Respectfully,

Matthew Bruns

████████████████████
Minneapolis, MN 55401
████████████████████