

## **Peter McLaughlin Biography**



### **CURRENT COUNTY SERVICE**

Commissioner, Hennepin County Board of Commissioners  
Chair, Hennepin County Regional Rail Authority  
Chair, Human Services Committee and Intergovernmental Committee  
Member, Public Safety & Judiciary

### **HENNEPIN COUNTY ACHIEVEMENTS**

- Coordinated the regional effort with the help of labor, business and the community in successfully lobbying for Light Rail Transit (LRT) funding and enhanced funding to strengthen the entire transit system in the metro area.
- Initiated creation of community service jobs in neighborhoods. Launched county cooperation in an enterprise of private small business and non-profit agencies to provide transportation for unemployed city residents to suburban jobs, a model of reverse commute.
- Helped to develop comprehensive bicycle transportation plan.
- Initiated creation of Five-Year Strategic Financial Plan as a budgeting tool to give better information as basis for longer term planning.
- Led the efforts to open the Stone Arch Bridge for use by citizens through successful partnership with city and state governments. Participated in bridge renovation and interpretive trails development.

### **CURRENT INTERGOVERNMENTAL SERVICE (partial list)**

- Chair, Metro Transitways Development Board, a seven-county consortium of regional rail authority members active proponent of multi-modal regional transportation investment to support economic growth and strong communities for the future.
- Member, Central Corridor Management Committee
- Member, Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC) Board and Legislative Steering Committee
- Steering Committee Member (and former Chair), National Association of Counties (NACo) Large Urban Counties Caucus
- Member, NACo Community & Economic Development Steering Committee
- Member, NACo Joint Center for Sustainable Development Task Force

### **CURRENT COMMUNITY SERVICE**

- Founding Member and Co-Chair, Phillips Partnership
- Founding Member, Midtown Community Works Partnership
- Chair & Founding Member, Phillips Community Energy Cooperative

### **GOVERNMENT SERVICE**

- Hennepin County Commissioner, 1991-present
- Chair, Hennepin County Board, 1995-1996
- Minnesota State Representative, 1985-1990, Assistant Majority Leader 1989-1990

### **MAJOR LEGISLATIVE ACHIEVEMENTS 1985-1990**

- Parental Leave, Chief Author
- State Jobs Program (MEED), Chief Author, 1991
- State Dislocated Worker Program, Chief Author
- Improvements in Youth Employment Program and State Job Service Legislation, Chief Author
- Increase in state childcare credit, Chief Author
- Mandatory neighborhood reinvestment and reporting requirements for banks engaged in interstate banking, Chief Author

### **FORMER LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEES (partial list)**

- Member, Transportation Committee
- Member, Tax Committee; Chair, Tax Laws Subcommittee
- Member, Economic Development Committee; Chair, Job Training & Retraining Subcommittee
- Co-Chair & Founder, House DFL Caucus Committee on Families

### **EDUCATION**

M.A., Hubert Humphrey School of Public Affairs, University of Minnesota, 1977  
A.B., Princeton University, 1971



# **Metro Transitways Development Board**

A Joint Powers Board of Metropolitan Counties

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## **REMARKS BEFORE THE NATIONAL SURFACE TRANSPORTATION POLICY AND REVENUE STUDY COMMISSION**

### **COMMISSIONER PETER MCLAUGHLIN, CHAIR METRO TRANSITWAYS DEVELOPMENT BOARD AND HENNEPIN COUNTY REGIONAL RAILROAD AUTHORITY**

**APRIL 18, 2007**

My name is Peter McLaughlin. I am Chair of the Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority and the Metro Transitways Development Board (MTDB). On behalf of the MTDB, I appreciate the chance to present our thoughts today.

The United States has always been a country on the move. Unfortunately, here in the Twin Cities and around the country we are slowing down. This trend undercuts economic growth, harms our residents and communities and adds to the growing worldwide threat of global warming.

As a nation, we have been bold in the past in our vision for transportation and backed up that vision with investment by all levels of government. Now is a moment to be bold once again . . . to invest in our future through innovative, integrated transportation infrastructure that support our residents, businesses, local communities and the earth's environment now and throughout this 21<sup>st</sup> century. The times demand no less.

The MTDB is a joint powers board comprised of the regional railroad authorities of the seven Twin Cities' metro-area counties.

The MTDB has advocated for a fully integrated, seamless, multi-modal, and affordable transportation network through roadway improvements, better bus service, and new transitways, i.e., busways, LRT and commuter rail lines. Our mantra is: MORE, FASTER.

We have provided a coordinated regional approach to rail and transit development that recognizes that collaboration and partnering are the most effective way to address transit needs with decisions by local elected officials.

We have played a pivotal role in the development of an alternative vision for transit and transportation in the Twin Cities region which has now fostered a groundswell of demand for new busways, LRT and commuter rail, and sought a strong state role in high speed rail. We played a very lonely role as advocates in the early and mid-90's, but the success of the Hiawatha LRT Corridor has silenced most of the skeptics and created an army of supporters for new, high quality transit investments.

In light of the time constraints and the unique role of the MTDB, I will limit my comments today to suggested policies affecting transit.

By way of context, the Twin Cities is a vibrant, growing community. Between 1990 and 2000 both our population and number of jobs grew by over 350,000. The population growth rate was 15.4% in the decade and over 40% (767,000) since 1970. The growth has continued since 2000. And six of the 100 fastest growing counties in the nation are in the Twins Cities travel shed (Scott, Sherburne, Wright, Chisago, Carver, Isanti)<sup>1</sup>

This growth is a positive indicator of our economic health in the region. It does, as you might well imagine, create serious problems for transportation. In our view, there is a transportation crisis brewing in this region. If this crisis is not addressed, it threatens the continued growth and economic vitality of this region as well as the long-term capacity of the environment to support us.

We need a robust federal presence to combat this crisis, consistent with the philosophy of integrated transportation investment reflected in ISTEA and SAFE-TEA LU.

Our recommendations for this presence are as follows:

- 1) While innovation and technology have a significant role to play, more federal funding for transportation investment is essential. Continued reliance on an increased gas tax, a user fee, is still warranted. Other innovative schemes may hold the key to our long-term future, but we believe that the gas tax is still how the rubber should meet the financing road for the near and medium term.
- 2) A higher portion of federal transportation funds should be designated for public transit by both increasing the transit percentage and allowing highway dollars to be used for transit components that enhance highway operations. We should not make transit improvements needed to complement highway projects wait in line for transit-only funds. Now is not the time to retreat from the commitments to transit reflected in ISTEA and SAFE-TEA LU. Federal policy could, for example, permit and encourage use of funding under the

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.census.gov/popest/counties/CO-EST2004-09.html>

category “National Highway System” for any project in a highway corridor that provides an alternative to travel on a highway, including public transit. This could prove improve the efficiency of the highway with a non-highway investment.

- 3) Streamline the New Starts funding process to make it simpler and quicker. The now years of experience with various New Starts lines across the country should allow delivery of federal funding more quickly, thus avoiding costly delays and the debilitating effects of inflation on projects. Specifically, we would ask that the federal government:
  - Avoid changing the rules in midstream;
  - Eliminate requirements that result in projects’ undergoing Risk Assessment workshops with changing guidelines every several months.
  - Evaluate whether FTA has sufficient staff to fulfill the vision of Congress and the policies of SAFE-TEA LU and its successor.
  - And finally, please don’t manage the queue by dragging out the approval process. This is not in the public interest. Delay is not our friend.
  
- 4) Modify the Cost Effectiveness Index (CEI) to reflect more than just travel-time savings for transit passengers. With the explosion of interest in New Starts projects all over this country, we fully acknowledge the need for a queuing mechanism to guide the federal funding process. It is our firm belief, however, that the existing CEI is, with its reliance solely on cost and congestion mitigation, inadequate. It can and does, in fact, often induce bad decisions that compromise the long-term impact and effectiveness of New Starts projects. It is our hope that scholars here at the University of Minnesota and elsewhere as well as transportation professionals in the field will devote considerable time to developing a new, more comprehensive queuing mechanism, including development impact. We believe that in addition to cost and transit travel-time savings, the replacement for the CEI should reflect indices such as community impacts, pollution reduction and energy savings. We look forward to additional technical work on this subject.
  
- 5) Encourage integration of land use on a broad scale and local planning for development along transit lines. It’s always been about more than just transportation, and our national transportation policies and procedures should reflect that reality. It’s a great opportunity that will help us shape the 21<sup>st</sup> century physical and economic realities of communities all over this country. We shouldn’t squander it with a narrow, transportation-only perspective.

- 6) Foster collaborative partnerships among units of government and between government and the private sector. Less restrictive processes would encourage private entities to participate in partnerships with governmental units, resulting in time and cost savings. Federal policy should make it easier for joint development to occur to maximize the promise that new rail stations offer our communities. Continuation of the central role of local elected officials is a critical component of this effort.
- 7) Develop new policies to assist local communities in dealing with the railroads. We must find a way to allow passenger- and freight-rail to coexist and prosper together. We do not have a list of specific policies changes to offer at this time, but we do believe that the balance needs to be changed and ask for your help. Without it, I fear we will not achieve an optimal level of investment in commuter rail. We must find a way to reflect more fully the public interest.
- 8) Reinforce and enhance the national commitment to multimodalism by strengthening the commitment to enhancements, re-elevating multimodalism within DOT and expanding support for bike path investment and other enhancements. Multimodalism is what takes transit from an option for some to a choice for many. By focusing on factors undercutting transit usage, we can expand the likelihood of future expansion.
- 9) The U.S. Department of Transportation should take a lead role in advocating for equal employee transportation fringe benefits across modes. Currently, IRS rules (Sec 132f) allow employees to pay for transit passes on a pre-tax basis up to \$110/month, and to pay for parking expenses up to \$215/month. There is simply no defensible reason why federal tax policy should provide a financial benefit to commuters who drive alone (and park) over those who choose transit as an alternative (Or biking, for that matter. Similar tax treatment of bike locker fees, for example, would level the playing field).
- 10) Get serious about high speed rail and intercity rail. It is time to finally start making these investments. The MTDB has been and continues to be supportive of the Midwest High Speed Rail Initiative.

In closing, the MTDB believes it is essential for the federal government to enhance its investment in transit if we are to hope to address the needs of our aging population, spiraling greenhouse gas emissions, reliance on foreign oil and all that this weakness entails, and the health and community benefits of more people walking and biking for a bigger share of their daily business.

Thank you. I look forward to the dialogue with my colleagues and the members of the Commission.