Region: Planning the Future of the Twin Cities
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Chapter 1: Local Governance, Finance and Growth Trends

The Twin Cities is an excellent case study of the (often negative) effects of highly fragmented systems of local governance on growth patterns.

It also illustrates the potential mitigating effects of strong *regional* governance systems.
Political Fragmentation

The 11 county metropolitan area includes 172 cities, 97 townships, 76 school districts, and more than 100 special districts. This structure results in more than 1,700 potential combinations and more than 500 actual taxing districts.
Fragmentation and Sprawl

• Highly fragmented regions like the Twin Cities tend to sprawl more than less fragmented metros.

Local Governments per 10,000 Population

Twin Cities

Portland

Predicted Sprawl
Fragmentation and Sprawl

• Highly fragmented regions like the Twin Cities tend to sprawl more than less fragmented metros.

• At least partly as a result of this, the 7-county area is urbanizing rapidly
MINNEAPOLIS-ST. PAUL SEVEN-COUNTY REGION:
Urbanized Land, 1986

Legend
- Urbanized 1986

Data Source: Remote Sensing and Geospatial Analysis Laboratory, University of Minnesota.
Land is being urbanized (converted from undeveloped to developed) significantly more quickly than population is growing
Growth in Urbanized Land, Population and Households
Twin Cities 7 County Metro: 1986-2002


Urbanized Land  Household  Population
Fragmentation and Sprawl

• Highly fragmented regions like the Twin Cities tend to sprawl more than less fragmented metros.

• At least partly as a result of this, the 7-county area is urbanizing rapidly

• But strong regional planning can mitigate the relationship between fragmentation and sprawl. The regions with the strongest regional planning systems—Portland and the Twin Cities—fare better than predicted, given their fragmentation.

Local Governments per 10,000 Population

Twin Cities

Portland

Predicted Sprawl
Fragmentation and Fiscal Inequality, Segregation, Job Growth

- Highly fragmented regions like the Twin Cities also tend to show greater fiscal inequality, greater segregation rates, and less job growth than less fragmented metros.
Fragmentation and Fiscal Inequality, Segregation, Job Growth

• But, as with sprawl, strong regional planning mitigates the effects of fragmentation on fiscal inequality, segregation and job growth. The regions with the strongest regional planning systems—Portland and the Twin Cities—fare better than predicted, given their fragmentation.

• Portland is typically a leader among less-fragmented regions while the Twin Cities lead the way among highly-fragmented areas.
Gini Coefficient, 2001

Local Governments per 10,000 Population

Predicted Inequality

Twin Cities

Portland
White/Black Dissimilarity Index 2000

Local Governments per 10,000 Population

Predicted Segregation

Twin Cities

Portland
Chapter 2: Governing the Twin Cities

The Twin Cities has a unique and one of the most powerful regional governments in the country—the Metropolitan Council. Originally formed in 1967, the Council has steadily gained powers, but its governance structure has not evolved with its powers.
• The Council now spends more per year than every other general purpose government in the metro, except Hennepin County and Minneapolis

• Unlike state agencies, it provides direct services to residents and municipalities in several dimensions, including transit, sewers and water treatment

• Unlike state agencies, it serves only a portion of the state
Met Council Bonded Debt

• The Council has more bonded debt than every other general purpose government in the metro, except Minneapolis

• It has more bonded debt than all of the county governments in its seven-county service area combined
Met Council Bonded Debt: 1991-2005

• The Council’s bonded debt is increasing steadily from about $500 million in 1991 to more $1 billion in 2005
The Scope of the Met Council

- The Council is committed to provide sewer, water treatment and transportation infrastructure to 31% of the area in the 7 county region
- This is expected to increase to 40% by 2030
Policy Recommendations: the structure of the Met Council

• The current structure (appointments by the Governor) makes the Council unrepresentative and unstable.
  – The council is almost always composed of members from only one party, despite the fact its service area is fairly evenly split between the two parties.
  – It can shift from being composed of members from one party alone to being entirely from the other party virtually over night when a new governor is elected.
Alternative Governance Structures:
Direct Election of 16 Council Members

• Based on recent elections and current district boundaries, an elected council would usually be fairly evenly balanced between Democrats and Republicans.
  • In 2002, when Republicans carried the House and Senate, Met Council districts split 9 Republican to 7 Democratic
  • In 2004 and 2006, Met Council districts split 10 Democratic to 6 Republican
  • The actual split on the appointed Council from 2002 – 2006 was 16 Republicans and 0 Democrats
Recommended Alternative Governance Structure: Direct Election of 16 Council Members

- Over a longer period from 1992 to 2006, the Council would have had relatively balanced representation, with a Democratic majority in 5 of 8 election years (or during 10 of the 16 years).

Projected Election Result

Actual Appointments

0  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10  11  12  13  14

Other recommendations

• More explicit development guidelines—such as housing density—for policy areas.
• Better coordination between land use and transportation planning (especially transit), with greater emphasis on job clustering and TOD.
• Reconstitute the State Planning Agency, to guide development at the metropolitan-rural transition.
Other recommendations

• Expand the Council’s service area to include the entire metropolitan economy—add the four collar counties.

• More aggressive use of the Councils powers in housing policy—to pursue region-wide, affordable housing policies directing more affordable housing to areas near growing job centers and good schools, in particular.
Chapter 4: Transportation and Jobs

As in most metropolitan areas, jobs are decentralizing in the Twin Cities—suburban job centers are growing more rapidly than those in core areas.

Jobs are also de-concentrating—scattered-site jobs are growing more rapidly than those in job centers.
Job clustering is important because clustering:

- Enables more efficient use of infrastructure (highways, trunk roads, sewer and water lines)
- Facilitates provision of supportive services like day care near job sites, reducing commute miles and time
- Increases the efficiency of the economy via agglomeration effects
- Makes transit a more feasible option, enhancing access to jobs for lower-income workers without cars, and making smart growth options (TOD) more viable.
The Twin Cities compare relatively well to other areas in the share of regional jobs in job centers in the core (central cities and inner suburbs) and in job centers (rather than scattered-site locations).

But job centers in the core are growing more slowly than in outer areas—10% vs. 25%—and non-clustered jobs are growing more quickly than job centers overall—14% vs. 31%. (One result of this is that congestion is increasing more rapidly in suburban areas than in the core.)
An important result of this pattern is that workers of color are much more likely to work in declining or slow-growth job centers than white workers—48% of black workers work in these job centers, for instance, compared to 31% of white workers.
Policy Recommendations

• Greater emphasis is needed on focusing job growth in job clusters. This is vital to:
  – Enhancing the viability of transit;
  – Encouraging growth in core areas;
  – Increasing opportunities for low-income workers

• Better coordination of transit and transportation planning with land use planning
  – Without a strong focus on clustering jobs in transportation corridors, greater transit spending may be futile
  – Affordable housing shortfalls in suburban areas near growing job centers are a continuing problem
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