

TOPICS AND PRESENTERS

IMPROVING TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS & VMT REDUCTION

AFTER A LONG DRY SUMMER – KNOWING YOUR RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES AS WATER APPROPRIATORS

Mayor Doug Anderson welcomed everyone to the October 18, 2021 RCM meeting.

- Intro to Westwood Hills Nature Center (Mayor Jake Spano)
 - Building uses environmental design features – uses only the energy it needs and
 - Designed by HGA, received AIA Honor Award
 - Additional information available: [Westwood Hills Nature Center](#)
- Directors Report (Caren Dewar)
 - Next meeting, November 8: What is next for office space?
 - Tom Fisher
 - Panel of real estate professionals on office conversions
 - Location TBC: Saint Louis Park (City Hall or Nature Center)

IMPROVING TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS & VMT REDUCTION

- **Speakers:**
 - Nancy Daubenberger, Deputy Commissioner and Chief Engineer, MnDOT
 - Nissa Tupper, Transportation and Public Health Planner, MnDOT
 - Emma Struss, Sustainability Coordinator, City of Bloomington
 - Ash Narayanan, Executive Director, Our Streets Minneapolis
- **Presentation - [LINK](#)**
 - MnDOT to adopt a goal to reduce VMT by 20% statewide by 2050
 - Adopted as a primary goal while a final goal is refined and developed
 - Public engagement and revisions will happen Jan-Mar 2022
 - Early considerations:
 - Goal is not to restrict options or economic growth
 - Nuance recommendations by community type
 - Do not put the hardest burdens on communities of color and/or low-income communities
 - Alignment with other VMT efforts (other states and local governments)
 - Looking at where MnDOT should lead, partner, and support and finding the right role for each recommendation
 - Increasing transportation options and reducing VMTs
 - New division: MnDOT Sustainability & Public Health
 - Embed public health and equity into decision-making
 - Reduce emissions from transportation
 - Identify and factor climate risks into decision-making
 - Reduce MnDOT emissions
 - Limited progress so far on NextGen energy goals
 - Goals were 15% reduced by 2015, 30% reduction by 2025, and 80% reduction by 2050
 - Currently not on track – just at 8% reduction from baseline
 - Industrial, Residential, and Commercial sectors are headed in the wrong direction right now

- Examples of what's happening already:
 - *Rochester* – Sustainability Task Force, set goals for both the city and the community
 - *Columbia Heights* – Sustainability Commission now launching
 - *Minnetonka* – Sustainability Commission recently chartered; high degree of interest and applicants; now 100% of the energy the city purchases is solar
 - *Plymouth* – PPP to expand EV charging stations around the city
 - *Edina* – Energy and Environment Commission formed in 2010, will present Climate Action Plan to the Council soon; working on greenhouse gas emissions with city vehicles and buildings
 - *Lakeville* – purchasing all energy from solar; GreenSteps program (which many cities here are a part of)
 - *Minnesota Cities Climate Caucus*
 - *Saint Louis Park* – Set goal of climate neutrality by 2040; also struggling to stay on track; exploring whether to declare a climate emergency that make enable faster action
 - *Prior Lake* – Time of Sale energy disclosure
 - *New Brighton* – Parks, Recreation, & Environment Commission; many other initiatives and grant-funded opportunities
- Sustainable Transportation Advisory Council
 - Applications are currently open through the end of October
 - Launched in Spring 2020; three workgroups:
 - VMT & Transportation Options
 - Fueling & powering
 - Resilience
 - MnDOT facilitates, but has no role in creating/approving recommendations
 - Comprehensive suite of strategies needed
 - EV incentives & charging infrastructure
 - Fuel efficiency, low carbon options
 - Transit advantages
 - VMT – less time in a personal vehicle (inc. telecommuting and telehealth)
- Next steps in reducing VMT
 - Higher fuel efficiency standards are undercut by increases in VMT (national data)
 - In Minnesota, VMTs grew up 44% since 1992 while population only grew 36%
 - Transportation emissions in MN grew 30.5% since 1990
 - MN had a decrease in VMT at the start of the pandemic, but rural Minnesota is back to pre-pandemic levels of driving (fewer alternatives available) and the Metro is about 5-10% below pre-pandemic VMT
 - Remote working has increased short trips during the work day
 - Even while commutes feel significantly easier, that doesn't mean VMTs have dropped off significantly; peak travel times have simply spread out
 - Would be helpful to understand local variations and implications at a greater level of detail
 - Per person, 20% decrease in VMT means ~1hr driving or 45 miles
 - Racial justice component
 - Communities of color are disproportionately harmed by where we have made our transit investments (air quality, asthma)
 - Black and Native people are more likely to be the victim of non-motorist fatalities (hit while walking or biking)
 - White households are most likely to have a vehicle, black households are the least likely
 - Transportation access

- Bloomington case study: largest apartment to health clinic
 - 10 min drive
 - 25 min bike
 - 50 min bus (best case)
 - 90 min walk
- Goal is to reduce vehicle miles travelled, not people miles travelled
- **Discussion**
 - *Where do you anticipate seeing this reduction (local, county, state roads)? What % of emissions are on the 10% of roads MnDOT controls?*
 - Data in progress here
 - *Note that promoting alternative vehicle strategies is only effective when the alternative are adequate, and they are currently not up to par. With \$8 billion of federal resources entering the state, how can that money be used to enhance these systems so that they are reasonable and attractive alternatives?*
 - State legislature has set some money aside for the next session; may be more opportunities if the Infrastructure bill passes
 - *What impact has amazon and other instant order/delivery options had on VMT?*
 - Freight has increased and is expected to increase further
 - Will take public and private sector to address
 - Looking at creating an intergovernmental commission to address some of these issues
 - Local governments may have opportunities the state does not to address “last mile” deliveries (looking at options for exercising control over right of way)
 - *What are the impacts of AVs, RideShare, and similar options? Feels as though we need to leapfrog busses in how we look at the future.*
 - *How do we think about transit options within suburban communities? We have great transit access to downtown Minneapolis, but within the city there are few options and little demand. Can Lyft and other options be good last mile options? Are these a better option to Metro Mobility? Feels important to explore public-private options.*

Links: [MnDOT response to STAC Recommendations \(full report PDF\)](#)

[Star Tribune Opinion Exchange, 9/20/21, “Transportation policy must lead way to low-carbon future”](#)

AFTER A LONG DRY SUMMER – KNOWING YOUR RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES AS WATER APPROPRIATORS

- **Speakers:** Jay Lindgren & Michael Drysdale (Dorsey & Whitney)
- **Presentation - [LINK](#)**
 - Drought implications: 2021 was first major metro drought in a decade
 - Drought is better now than it was in August, but when at its height it was an extreme drought in much of the Mississippi watershed, which has a big implication for how much water reaches the Metro
 - Near-permanent drought conditions out West present opportunities and concerns for Minnesota
 - Basics of Water Appropriations
 - DNR has broad permitting authority, from water supply permitting to non-essential uses
 - Permit holders have limited rights if DNR invokes permit clause (can contest), but do have rights to a hearing if there are changes, and no changes can be made until that administrative hearing is resolved
 - Right now, there are few restrictions on use, even as all uses have increased
 - This puts growing pressure on water supplies

- Met Council does have a Master Water Supply Plan, with targets (75 gal/day per capita for residential, 90 gal/day per capita for industrial/commercial use)
 - *White Bear Lake* litigation
 - Homeowners sued DNR for failing to protect White Bear Lake
 - Judge sided with homeowners and changed all permits within 5 miles of the lake, including making Met Council targets hard restrictions and setting a collective area withdrawal limit
 - DNR believes current usage of water would need to decline 40% in order to meet standards; targeting Q1 2022 for changes
 - Supreme Court largely uphold decision on appeal, but there are ongoing contested cases around individual permits
 - What does this mean for us?
 - Expect more DNR oversight – new limits on appropriation increases, new permits
 - *White Bear Lake* could lead to future similar litigation, where the court system could make a decision independent of the DNR (increased unpredictability)
 - Water availability could be an asset for Minnesota, if we manage our supply well
 - What should you look to do?
 - Conduct a self-diagnosis against Met Council goals and identify future needs
 - Contingency planning
 - Consider:
 - New construction standards
 - Updated infrastructure (e.g., surface water retention, stormwater mgmt)
 - Improved monitoring
 - Targeted restrictions
- **Discussion**
 - Tension between growing community (and Met Council goals) and reduced water supply (DNR goals) – everyone needs to get on the same page. Also, when everyone pulls from the same aquifer and everyone doesn't hold themselves to the same standard, there's a frustrating lack of equity.
 - With new construction, what drought-resistant plants and other policies should we be considering?
 - Limited grass, alternative landscaping
 - Saint Louis Park put RFID monitors around the city and were able to help residents identify leaks and other forms of running water. Separately, is there any risk of other states suing us for access to the fresh water in the Great Lakes?
 - Great Lake Compact (national and international) has been in place since the 1970s and should be a sufficient hedge against western state litigation
 - Western states could attempt to buy some of that water, but that would have to be negotiated by all the Great Lakes State and Canada
 - Are there technology options that can be enforced by ordinance that only water when needed?
 - Not sure of ordinance language; much easier for new construction than for existing options
 - DNR may have some options
 - How do we think about water economics?
 - Around White Bear Lake, they're considering what financial supports are needed to move companies off groundwater to surface water (given that change would benefit the region and the costs shouldn't be borne by only one city).
 - Can you say more about the collective withdrawal limit implications?
 - Decision said collective withdrawal limit needed to be set based on modelling to protect the lake to a certain level – DNR is now saying that would be the 40% reduction from current use
 - Hard for a city to be the leader on conditional use permit restrictions on water as it could stifle new development; may need to be a regional conversation.
- **UPCOMING MEETING: Monday, November 15, 11:30-1:30PM: - Future of Office Space ULI MN Real Estate Panel; Post-Pandemic Cities – Tom Fisher, Design Center; St. Louis Park City Hall**

