



Metropolitan Council  
2007 Annual Report



Moving Us  
*Forward*



transportation  
water resources  
regional parks  
planning  
housing

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and employer program information

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## Council Mission

The mission of the Metropolitan Council is to develop, in cooperation with local communities, a comprehensive regional planning framework, focusing on transportation, wastewater, parks and aviation systems, that guides the efficient growth of the metropolitan area. The Council operates transit and wastewater services, and administers housing and other grant programs.

## Recalling our past, shaping our future

From the Chair



Last year marked the 40th anniversary of the Metropolitan Council's creation. Our anniversary provided an opportunity to reflect on the problems that led to the Council's creation and the considerable progress that has been made, as well as some of the challenges that lie ahead.

We did this through a half-hour documentary produced in cooperation with Twin Cities Public Television, a Regional Policy Conference conducted with the support of The McKnight Foundation and other activities throughout the year.

However, 2007 was much more than a year of introspection. The Council moved forward aggressively on a number of fronts. Major milestones included:

- Securing federal funding to begin construction of the region's first commuter rail line in the Northstar corridor, and moving forward with plans for our second light-rail line in the Central corridor.
- Winning a \$133 million federal grant to improve transit and ease traffic congestion in the Twin Cities metro area.
- Gaining approval of legislation authorizing a new Regional Parks Foundation to solicit funds from the private sector and accelerate the acquisition of land for our regional parks system.
- Increasing our use of renewable fuels and partnering with the University of Minnesota on research aimed at developing new sources of renewable energy.

These and other accomplishments are detailed in the pages that follow. In many cases, they would not have been possible without the active support of project partners at the local, state and national levels. The Council looks forward to continued collaboration with our partners as we seek solutions to the problems that lie ahead.

Peter Bell  
Chair  
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*Transit  
improvement  
projects gain  
momentum*

In a recent survey, 55 percent of metro area residents said they believe it is “very important” to invest in new rail transit options. Substantial percentages also consider it very important to expand the bus system, add new express bus routes and increase the number of park-and-ride lots.

The good news is that this region is moving forward on all fronts. In 2007, the region made progress toward the development of four bus and rail “transitways” in heavily traveled corridors:

- Northstar commuter rail
- Central Corridor light-trail transit (LRT)
- I-35W bus rapid transit (BRT)
- Cedar Avenue BRT

All of these projects are part of the Council’s 2030 plan to expand the bus system, develop a network of transitways and slow the growth in traffic congestion.

# transportation



## Northstar on track to open in 2009

A \$158.6 million federal grant for Northstar will help build the region's first commuter-rail line between downtown Minneapolis and Big Lake, and purchase the rolling stock needed to begin service in late 2009.

In 2007, the Council and project partners broke ground for the line's maintenance facility in Big Lake, began a four-block extension of the Hiawatha LRT line, and ordered four remanufactured locomotives and 17 passenger cars. They will feature colors reminiscent of the Hiawatha LRT vehicles, while retaining the "north star" icon that has long been associated with the project.

The \$320 million line will feature stations in Big Lake, Elk River, Anoka, Coon Rapids and a new intermodal station in downtown Minneapolis. The line will serve a projected 5,900 riders per weekday by 2030 and provide a predictable, 41-minute commute downtown in one of the region's fastest-growing corridors.

## Central Corridor LRT project advances



The Central Corridor LRT project moved forward in 2007 with the establishment of a project office, the hiring of staff and key consultants, and the formation of several advisory committees to provide public input during preliminary engineering.

As originally proposed, the line would feature 16 stations between downtown St. Paul and Minneapolis, plus five shared stations with the Hiawatha line in downtown Minneapolis.

It would terminate at the new intermodal station near the Twins new ballpark, which is scheduled to open in 2010.

During preliminary engineering, some features of the proposed line may have to be changed to reduce its cost and meet federal cost-effectiveness requirements. The goal is to complete preliminary engineering in 2008, win federal approval to begin final design and complete construction by 2014. The line will carry a projected 38,000 riders each weekday by 2020 and 43,000 riders by 2030.

## Region wins UPA grant

This region was one of five metro areas to win funding last year under the U.S. Department of Transportation's new Urban Partnership Agreement (UPA) program. Grantees agree to use aggressive congestion reduction strategies under the umbrella of four T's – tolling, transit, telecommuting and technology.

### The Twin Cities' \$133 million federal grant will help fund:

- Dynamically priced shoulder lanes – a new concept for this region – on I-35W from 46th Street to downtown Minneapolis.
- Conversion of the High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lane to High Occupancy Toll (HOT) lane on I-35W south of 46th Street, including the Crosstown section now under construction, to Burnsville Parkway.
- Development of three new park-and-ride lots in the I-35W corridor and the acceleration of several planned lots in the Cedar Avenue corridor.
- Construction of double-lane dedicated bus lanes in downtown Minneapolis on Marquette and Second Avenues, along with wider sidewalks, improved passenger waiting shelters, improved lighting and streetscaping.



## Regional transit ridership soars



Fueled by high gasoline prices and traffic congestion, Metro Transit ridership for 2007 was on pace to top 77 million, the highest level since 1982. The region's core bus system carried an average of 220,000 riders per weekday and the Hiawatha LRT line served another 28,000 per weekday, exceeding the line's pre-construction estimates for the year 2020.

Ridership on suburban transit authority buses and the Council's contracted regular-route buses experienced similar increases. Total ridership on those services grew

from 6.7 million rides in 2006 to an estimated 7.2 million rides in 2007, a jump of more than 6 percent

Meanwhile, Metro Transit ramped up its efforts to protect the environment and improve the security of its passengers.

Metro Transit took delivery of 19 hybrid electric buses, the first of 169 that will be added to its fleet over the next five years. These buses get 22 percent better mileage and produce 90 percent lower emissions than the vehicles they replace. For its conventional diesel buses, Metro Transit made the switch in August from a 5 percent biodiesel fuel to a 10 percent blend and will go to a 20 percent blend in the summer months starting in 2008.

To enhance security, Metro Transit added four police officers and four community service officers to its police force, increased the bus presence of transit police by 500 percent, retrofitted 260 buses with high-tech digital surveillance cameras and made this the standard for all new buses.



## Other transportation highlights:

- The Council approved a \$2.5 billion regional Transportation Improvement Program for 2008-11 to acquire land and build new roads, maintain existing ones and fund transit projects.
- Use of park-and-ride lots increased 11 percent in the 12 months ending October 2007. The Council continued to expand the region's park-and-ride facilities, opening or starting construction of ramps or lots ranging from 550 to 1,450 spaces in Minnetonka, Brooklyn Center and Bloomington.
- Participation continued to grow in Metropass, the Council's employer-subsidized transit program. Some 170 employers now make the pass available to nearly 148,000 employees. Ridership by Metropass users was up more than 15 percent for 2007.
- Metro Mobility in 2007 provided a projected 1.15 million rides to people with disabilities while maintaining an on-time performance rate of more than 97 percent.



# *water resources*

Most people don't think twice about being able to turn a faucet to get clean drinking water or flush a toilet to get rid of wastewater.

That's because the Metropolitan Council and other government agencies work hard to ensure an adequate, safe supply of water for the growing region and to build, operate and maintain a wastewater collection and treatment system that protects the public health and the environment.

The Council moved forward on several fronts in 2007 to help effectively manage the region's water resources:

- Achieved outstanding performance at its wastewater treatment plants.
- Worked in partnership with communities to reduce inflow and infiltration of stormwater into sanitary sewers.
- Made progress toward achieving a 15 percent reduction in energy use by 2010 in the wastewater collection and treatment system.
- Laid the groundwork for development of a regional water supply master plan by the end of 2008.



*Protecting  
the region's  
water  
resources*

## Wastewater plants are tops in nation

The Metropolitan Council's Environmental Services Division (MCES) maintains about 600 miles of regional wastewater collection pipes and operates eight regional wastewater treatment plants, treating more than 250 million gallons of wastewater each day from 104 communities. Two of those plants are among the top 11 in the nation when measured by consecutive years of full compliance with their clean water discharge permits.

In 2007, the National Association of Clean Water Agencies (NACWA) recognized the Hastings and St. Croix Valley Wastewater Treatment Plants for 16 and 15 consecutive years, respectively, of full compliance with environmental permits (based on their 2006 performance). The Seneca Plant earned a Platinum 6 Award for recording its sixth consecutive year of full compliance.

In addition to the awards for sustained compliance, NACWA gave Gold Awards to plants that achieved full compliance in 2006, and Silver Awards for plants with no more than five permit exceedances. Earning Gold Awards were Blue Lake, Eagles Point and Rosemount; earning Silver Awards were Empire and Metro.

## Keeping clear water out of sewers

The Council's program to reduce the inflow and infiltration (I/I) of stormwater into sanitary sewers in the region produced solid results in 2007.

All 46 of the region's communities with excessive I/I took action to reduce the problem. For the second year, the Council in 2008 will defer proposed surcharges on community wastewater bills because of further commitments made by the communities to reduce I/I to acceptable levels.

The Council initiated a grant program to provide matching funds for local spending to disconnect foundation drains from the sanitary sewer system, a significant source of I/I. Communities are eligible for grants up to half the cost of individual disconnections, with a cap of \$1,000 for each disconnection. A total of \$700,000 is available in 2008.

The overall I/I reduction program has become a national model for addressing the problem before it becomes a crisis. Excess clear water robs the regional wastewater collection and treatment system of capacity needed for future growth, and accelerates the need for expensive infrastructure improvements. It also can cause sewer backups, resulting in threats to human health and the environment.



## Cutting back on energy use

Wastewater collection and treatment is an energy-intensive business, and for many years MCES has worked to achieve greater energy efficiencies. Last year, MCES set an ambitious goal to reduce, or offset by renewable energy purchased, the net non-renewable energy needed for MCES facilities by 15 percent by 2010.

Energy activities undertaken in 2007 will result in an annual energy savings of four gigawatt hours, or 15 percent of MCES' 2010 goal. The savings go beyond previous gains, including savings from the start-up of the Metro Plant's new Solids Management Building. The reduction in energy use, combined with utility rebates received in 2007, saved the Council approximately \$360,000 over 2006.

The Council will continue to pursue energy reduction efforts, among them:

- Work in-house, with Xcel Energy and with other consultants to identify and implement a variety of energy-saving projects at the treatment plants.
- Join with the University of Minnesota to research the feasibility of growing algae in wastewater effluent as a renewable fuel source.
- Collaborate with the Metro Counties Energy Task Force on a wind generation initiative.
- Work with the State Interagency Energy Team.



## Ensuring an adequate supply of water

Although the Twin Cities metro area is a relatively water-rich region, steady population growth – and the emerging issue of climate change – require careful planning to ensure an adequate supply of water for future generations. The 2005 Minnesota Legislature directed the Council to develop a base of technical information for water supply planning decisions and to prepare a regional water supply master plan.

In early 2007, the Council completed the first phase of its work and submitted a report to the Legislature. As a result, the Legislature acted on a recommendation in the report to clarify agency roles in the regional and state review of local water supply plans. The Council and Minnesota Department of Natural Resources are working to further improve and streamline the water supply decision-making process.

The second phase of the Council's work is laying the groundwork for completion of the water supply master plan by the end of 2008. The Council developed an online water conservation toolbox to help communities implement best management practices, improve water use efficiencies and meet water permitting requirements. The Council and its partners also are developing a new groundwater flow model designed to evaluate resource availability and develop options where local issues are identified.


The Council continues to work with federal and state agencies, local officials and other stakeholders to evaluate and support activities that improve the safety, security and reliability of local water systems. The Council is guided by a 13-member Metropolitan Water Supply Advisory Committee comprised of state agency, city and county representatives.





# *parks*

*Hike a prairie trail.  
Fish a placid lake.  
Ski through pristine forest.  
Splash in a giant wave pool.  
Enjoy a sumptuous picnic.*



The seven-county metropolitan area's network of regional parks and trails is the envy of urban areas around the country. The system:

- Has 49 regional parks, 177 miles of regional trails and six special recreation areas
- Protects 52,600 total acres of park land that includes lakeshore, wetlands, hardwood forests and native prairies
- Attracts more than 33 million visitors each year

A recent survey shows that 34 percent of metro area residents identify parks, trails and the natural environment as the region's single-most attractive feature; 78 percent say it is important to purchase land now for future regional parks and park expansion.



## Raising private funds for parks

Achieving the Council's vision for a regional park system to serve the seven-county metro area in 2030 and beyond is the challenge.

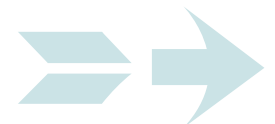
The Council proposes to add:

- 7 new regional parks, identified in partnership with local, regional and state planners
- 17,400 acres of new park land and 700 miles of trails

The cost of acquiring the remaining park lands is estimated at \$300 million in today's dollars. Opportunities for purchasing future park land will be lost if acquisition funds are not available as land goes on the market. Current and anticipated funding by the state and Metropolitan Council are not adequate to fund this expansion. Additional funding from private sources would complement the public sources, and serve as an incentive to achieve matching public funds.

In 2007 the Minnesota Legislature authorized the Metropolitan Council to establish a Regional Parks Foundation to serve as a park advocate and benefactor.

The Foundation will partner with other nonprofit conservation and parks organizations, such as the Parks and Trails Council of Minnesota, to promote, encourage and solicit private funds. It will coordinate efforts with the regional park agencies that own, manage and steward the region's parks, and it will seek out and encourage private landowners to make conservation donations at below-market prices.



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## A park for the future

The Council approved an acquisition master plan for Cedar Lake Farm, a new regional park in southern Scott County, and provided \$1 million from the Regional Park Acquisition Opportunity Fund to help acquire land for the proposed park. The Council also will allow up to \$3.5 million in acquisition costs to be eligible for reimbursement consideration in a future regional parks capital improvement program. The park will not be developed for many years.



## State funding to acquire and maintain parks

In 2007, the Minnesota Legislature appropriated \$2.5 million of Environment and Natural Resources Trust Funds to the Council's Regional Parks Acquisition Opportunity Fund, as recommended by the Legislative Citizens Commission on Minnesota Resources. The Council issued \$1.66 million of regional bonds to match the appropriation, for a total addition of \$4.16 million to the fund. During 2007 the Council granted \$1.2 million of that amount to help purchase 62 acres for Cedar Lake Farm Regional Park, noted above, and 8 acres for the future Grey Cloud Island Regional Park in Washington County.



The 2007 Legislature also appropriated \$4.05 million of general funds and \$4.57 million in lottery revenue to help pay for operation and maintenance of the regional parks. These funds were distributed to the 10 regional park implementing agencies using a state-sanctioned formula. The funds financed 9.7% of the 2007 budgeted costs to operate and maintain the park system.

## Council changes funding formula

The Council changed the formula for distribution of its regional parks capital improvement program funds for 2008-09. The total amount appropriated will be split among the 10 regional park implementing agencies based on population (70%) and number of visits to the parks from people living outside a given agency's jurisdiction (30%). The park agencies rank their projects for funding; the projects must be consistent with Council-approved master plans.



# planning



## Comprehensive plan updates due in 2008

From St. Francis in northern Anoka County to Randolph in southern Dakota County, communities in the seven-county metro region are laying out their visions for what they will look like in the year 2030.

Under state law, each the region's 189 municipalities and seven counties must update its local comprehensive plan at least once every 10 years. Looking into the future, the plans address land use, transportation, water supply, stormwater and wastewater management, parks and open space, and a variety of other issues.

In 2007, Council staff sector representatives held numerous meetings and phone consultations with local communities to provide guidance and information in the planning process. The Council also provided both financial and technical tools to communities engaged in updating their plans, among them:

- Planning grants of up to \$20,000 for single communities or \$50,000 to counties or groups of communities.
- The award-winning, online Local Planning Handbook, which features all the forecasts and forms that communities need to complete their plans.
- The Guide for Transit-Oriented Development, an online resource to aid communities in capitalizing on the economic development potential of transit corridors.



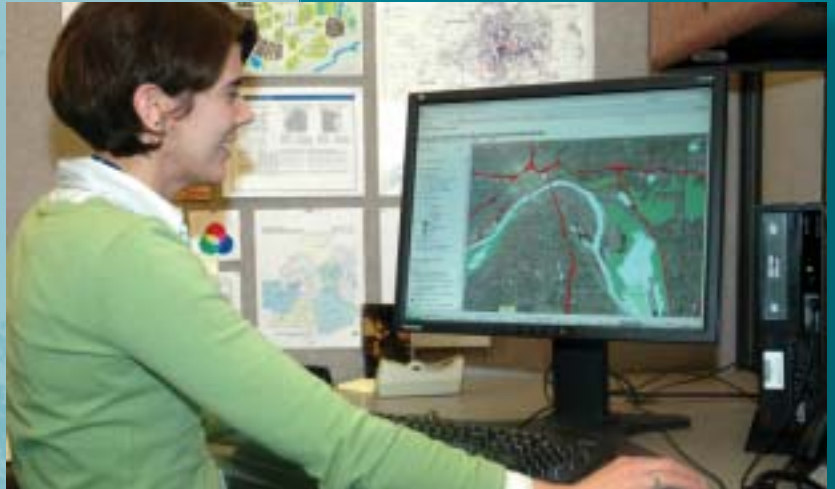
Internally, the Council's Planning and Growth Management Department is the pilot project for the Council's new Electronic Content Management System. The Council is digitally scanning each submitted comprehensive plan so that the relevant sections can get to staff reviewers more quickly. Smaller communities that expect little change in their plans may also request that their previous plan be scanned so they can update the plans easily.

All 2030 plan updates are due to the Council by the end of 2008.

The Council will review the plans for consistency with the *2030 Regional Development Framework* and the regional system plans for transportation, water resources, and parks and open space.

## New online mapping tools

In 2007, the Council launched new online mapping services. An interactive map allows users to build their own maps about the population, demographics, land use, resources and infrastructure of the metro area as a whole or for a smaller area such as a city or county. Users can also access and integrate aerial photos into maps.



## Investments help keep communities vital

The Council approved more than \$3.3 million in Livable Communities grants to clean up polluted land for redevelopment in six metro area communities. The grants will help to clean up 73 acres, with resulting redevelopment creating and retaining an expected 3,653 full- and part-time jobs and increasing the net tax capacity by \$6 million. The funds are expected to leverage \$310 million in private investment. Another \$3.3 million in 2007 Tax Base Revitalization Account funds are available to be awarded in January 2008.

The Council awarded more than \$5.9 million to seven projects in five cities that demonstrate land uses that link housing, jobs and services, including transit. Grants went to projects that demonstrate:

- Good development strategies for two challenging sites along transit corridors.
- Good mix of uses and appropriate density for a redevelopment to help a community transition from an agricultural to more urban downtown.
- More intensive development at a key location on the Central Corridor light-rail transit line.
- Model partnerships to create a senior housing development integrated into a large mixed-use development.
- Integration of open space and stormwater elements in an infill development.
- Redesign of a 1960s apartment complex in a first-ring suburb, including a stormwater management upgrade, and adding more housing at the site.

# housing



## Council helps meet housing needs

For the first time in five years, the Council's Metropolitan Housing and Redevelopment Authority (Metro HRA) opened its Section 8 and public housing waiting lists in May 2007. The response was overwhelming:

- 15,000 requests came in over four Tuesdays through telephone calls, emails and faxes.
- Because requests were often made on behalf of multiple households, for both waiting lists, Metro HRA sent out 25,000 applications.
- Metro HRA added 5,000 names from the completed applications, drawn randomly, to the Section 8 waiting list, and 1,000 names to the public housing list.



Because the demand is so great and the federal funding limited, applicants who made the lists could still wait several years before actually receiving a voucher or a public housing unit.

While opening the waiting lists was notable, the Council continued its day-to-day work to help meet the region's need for housing affordable to families with low and moderate incomes.

**Housing choice vouchers.** Metro HRA operates the state's largest Section 8 rent assistance program



for 100 suburban communities. As it has for several successive years, Metro HRA in 2007 achieved full use of its available tenant-based federal rent subsidy funding, assisting an average of 5,885 households monthly. Rental assistance payments were made to more than 2,300 property owners, injecting \$54 million of federal, state and local funds into the regional economy. The program's waiting list comprised about 5,500 households.

**Scattered site rental housing.** Metro HRA also uses federal funds to operate a scattered-site affordable rental housing program. The Council owns 150 homes in 11 suburban communities in Anoka, Hennepin and Ramsey Counties. The program houses low- to extremely low-income families, who pay 30 percent of their income for rent and utilities.

**Housing assistance to communities.** The Council in 2007 awarded a total of nearly \$1.9



*The Conley family of Minnetonka is among the 150 households that live in one of the Council's Family Affordable Housing Program units. Pictured are (from left) Daisha, Yolanda and Dierre.*

million to support affordable housing initiatives in Minneapolis, St. Paul, six suburbs and a multi-community land trust. The funds will assist in the development or rehabilitation of 253 rental units affordable to lower-income households, and 5 new and 35 rehabilitated affordable ownership units. The grants were made from the Local Housing Incentives Account of the Livable Communities Fund, and will leverage an additional \$53.6 million in total development investments.

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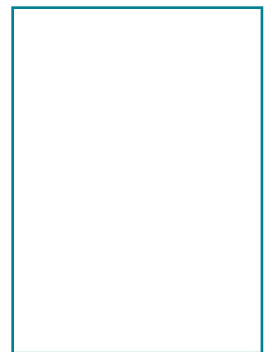
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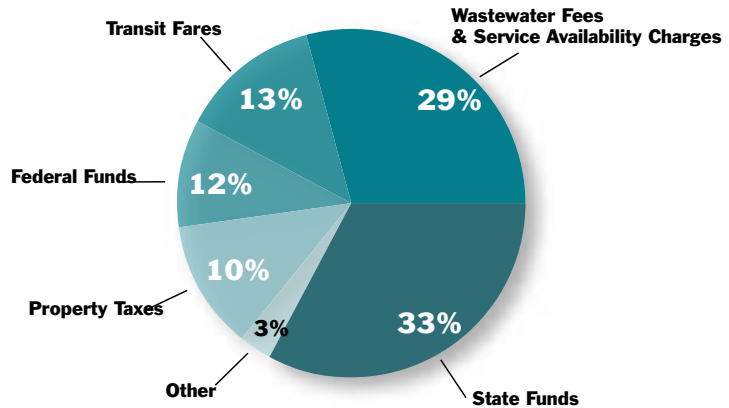
## Metropolitan Council 2007 Budget

The Metropolitan Council serves the public in five principal areas:

- 1) Providing and coordinating regional transit services and travel demand management through Metro Transit and regional route service; working with transit providers, transportation agencies and businesses to reduce traffic congestion and improve air quality; and providing transportation service to people with disabilities through Metro Mobility.
- 2) Conserving and protecting vital natural resources, principally water, by collecting and treating wastewater, and coordinating water supply planning and monitoring water quality; and open space, helping to plan, acquire and develop a system of regional parks.
- 3) Providing affordable housing choices by working with communities and employers to increase the supply of affordable housing, and providing affordable housing opportunities to low- and moderate-income families through the Metro Housing and Redevelopment Authority.
- 4) Providing resources and planning assistance to communities throughout the region to support coordinated, cost-effective growth.
- 5) Increasing efficiency of regional services and investments by maintaining a AAA credit rating, making efficient and effective capital improvements, and providing cost-competitive services.

### 2007 Budget Revenue

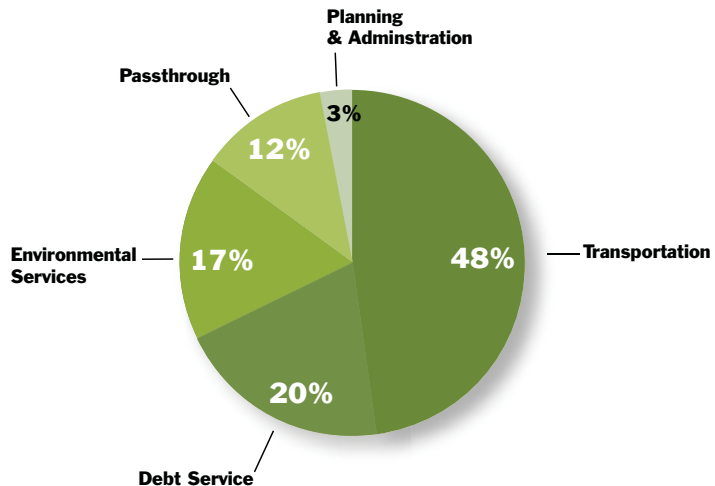
Total =	\$655,793,188
Wastewater Fees and Service Availability Charges	\$189,961,000
Transit Fares	\$ 83,006,296
Property Taxes	\$ 67,404,805
Federal Funds	\$ 81,434,149
Other	\$ 18,655,814
State Funds	\$215,331,124



### 2007 Budget Expenditures

Total =	\$662,278,418
Transportation	\$324,612,878
Environmental Services	\$110,869,445
Debt Service	\$129,943,303
Pass Through	\$ 79,409,683
Planning and Administration	\$ 17,443,109

Note: Revenues and expenditures for pass-through and debt-service funds rarely match on an annual basis. In 2007, the Council used reserves to make up the difference in revenues and expenditures.





## Council Executive Team

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Publication number 14-08-001

Upon request, this publication will be made available in alternative formats to people with disabilities. An annual report is required by statute.

Concept and design: Linda White.  
Writing and photos: Jeanne Landkamer and Jeff Syme.

The graphic preparation and printing of this publication cost \$4,961 for a total of 2,000 copies. This publication is printed on recyclable paper.



