

**DATE:** April 26, 2018  
**TO:** Minnesota US House Delegation  
**CC:** Senators Amy Klobuchar and Tina Smith  
**FROM:** Alene Tchourumoff, Metropolitan Council Chair  
**SUBJECT:** Lewis Amendment to H.R. 4, the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2018

Today, the United States House of Representatives is expected to debate H.R. 4, FAA Reauthorization Act of 2018. When this bill comes to the House floor, I urge you to oppose one of the amendments included in the rule: Representative Jason Lewis's amendment that would end the Metropolitan Council's designation as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Twin Cities region.

Under current law the Twin Cities region can change its MPO designation and structure but there is lack of consensus on what a new MPO structure should be. This amendment would simply force the process of redesignation to begin but would not resolve the differences of opinion on MPO structure that exist in the region. In addition to the concerns raised by Governor Dayton in his letter of opposition to this amendment, I want to highlight the following major challenges the greater Twin Cities metropolitan region will face, should this amendment become law.

- **Chaos comes from uncertainty:** The Council's designation as the MPO, in conjunction with the Transportation Advisory Board is a long-standing agreement dating back to 1973. This agreement balances local elected officials on the TAB with the gubernatorially-appointed Council and fits the MPO function of the Council into the other duties and responsibilities the organization has been given under state law.

If the Council is suddenly cast into uncharted territory as an MPO out of compliance with federal law, we cannot predict whether the region and its many diverse interests would be able to continue to find common ground on distributing federal funding during the intervening period. The Regional Solicitation for \$200 million in federal funds (for fiscal 2021 and 2022 dollars) will be released this summer with the selection of a program of projects expected in early 2019. The recipients of these funds are primarily counties and cities within the metropolitan area. If a redesignation of the MPO is required, these funds might not be available or allowed to be allocated by the U.S. DOT. At a minimum this in-limbo status would cause a major delay in the selection process and in local units of governments' ability to plan for and develop projects for expenditure of these funds, potentially calling into question the allocation of these funds for years until this issue is resolved. This period of uncertainty between the Lewis amendment becoming law and Minnesota designating a new MPO would paralyze our regional transportation planning and funding efforts, not just at the Council but within all seven counties.

- **Billions of federal dollars in jeopardy:** The TAB, with the concurrence of the Council, expects to program and distribute approximately \$2B in federal funding during the 2018-2021 period through the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Additionally, the Council expects to receive more than a billion in federal funding for major transit projects planned in this region. If a redesignation of the MPO is required, these funds might not be available or allowed to be allocated by the U.S. DOT.

- **Major transit investments jeopardized:** Should the Federal Transit Administration determine the region is in turmoil and too much of a risk to distribute funding, significant regional transit projects including METRO Orange Line, Green Line Extension and Blue Line Extension would likely be halted. These needed investments in regional mobility might never recover if the conflict drags on.
- **Rural parts of the greater metropolitan region could be impacted:** At present, the MPO designation includes all seven counties and their rural areas. It does not include the urbanized areas of St. Michael and Albertville, by agreement. A redesignation could force St. Michael and Albertville into the MPO's jurisdiction while also excluding rural areas within the seven-county metropolitan area. It is uncertain what, if any, federal funding these excluded rural areas would be eligible for if a redesignation occurred.

I urge you to oppose the Lewis Amendment when it comes up for a vote as part of H.R. 4.