

# Milwaukie fears Metro may ride roughshod over cities

## Panel's chief reassures community leaders of local input in drafting new agency charter

By NICHOLA ZAKLAN  
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MILWAUKIE — When a Metro committee came to town this week, the city seized the opportunity to deliver a message: "Don't tread on me."

Council member Chere Sandusky urged the Metro Charter Committee to consider Milwaukie's goals and visions in designing the rules and purpose of the region's mammoth service district. Remember, she said, the Milwaukie community has different needs than other cities and areas that are part of the district.

Sandusky said the city is working to increase intergovernmental cooperation in

the area of water, fire and sewer services. Milwaukie wants to continue to be a player in the decisions about how local governments regionalize services.

What's at stake is the design of a document that could determine the role and power of the tri-county service district for years to come. Currently, only the state Legislature can make decisions about what Metro can and cannot do. Last November, however, state voters approved a measure allowing Metro to write a charter that will give voters who actually live within the service district — the portions of Multnomah, Washington and Clackamas counties within the urban growth boundary — the right to decide Metro's direction.

This summer and fall, the 16-member Charter Committee will come up with a draft. Members plan to have a final charter ready for the 1992 primary or general election.

Yet, if the Milwaukie hearing is any indication, the committee is likely to encounter a lot of advice, criticism and fretting along the way. Many North Clackamas business and government leaders view Metro as a regional behemoth that will mow down local control in its path.

"Bigger is not necessarily better," said Chris Utterback, a member of the I-205 Corridor Association, a local business group. "There is a fear in North Clackamas that we will have no input. We are fearful that they will try to control local governments instead of facilitating their cooperation."

But committee chairman Hardy Myers, a Portland lawyer, said such fears are unfounded. "I'm quite certain there is no

sentiment on the Charter Committee to design a charter that would blot out and replace the significant role local governments play in the region."

Myers said the committee plans to solicit plenty of local input in drafting the charter, in public meetings such as the one in Milwaukie. The committee also will invite local leaders to participate in different aspects of the charter design. And later, once the committee has a specific proposal, it will seek additional public comment and ideas.

Nevertheless, Utterback and other business leaders and groups, including the North Clackamas Chamber of Commerce, aren't resting easy. They will continue to lobby Metro to make sure it pays attention to local issues. For instance, Utterback and other business leaders think Metro should extend the urban growth boundary to add undeveloped industrial land to the north county area.

"We want them to look at the issues here," said Utterback. "The way it is now, people are living in Clackamas and working in Beaverton. There's too much travel, and it artificially inflates the price of land. Let's redefine this now, not later. We want to get control back into local hands."

Still, some city officials feel that Metro will have to play a significant role in the future of the region. Maggie Collins, Milwaukie community development director, said many problems cannot be solved without regional cooperation, and many services can be delivered more efficiently with regional coordination. Affordable housing, water, sewer, community activity centers and green space all can be addressed better regionally.

"When you are talking about scarce resources," Collins said, "we can do much better together."

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# Area officials relate views of Metro charter

By DOUG BROWNING  
Of the Argus

The chief administrator for the Metropolitan Service District should be appointed by the district's elected council and not be elected separately as is now the case, says Washington County Board Chairman Bonnie Hays.

She was one of several local officials who testified Tuesday night before the special committee authorized by the Legislature to draft a Metro charter for consideration by the region's voters.

Hays noted that Metro Executive Officer Rena Cusma and the 12-member council both feel they have mandates from the voters and that this has caused conflicts.

"With the council directing a professional staff, I believe that we would see . . . a more efficient and less costly structure.

"(We might also see a Metro relieved of some of its internal strife and with more energy to devote to developing consensus among other governments—we might find a proactive partner."

Hillsboro Mayor Shirley Huffman also endorsed the "council-manager" form of government, which both the city and county use.

"Having a politician instead of a professional manager be the chief administrative officer increases the risk that he or she will try to set an agenda rather than carry out the policies of the council," she said.

One of the committee members asked Huffman what authority the committee should include for Metro when it draws up the proposed charter.

"The charter shouldn't add any additional powers," she said, noting that it could be amended later if people decide a regional solution is needed to a particular problem.

"What's important to us," Huffman said, "is to be asked, not told, what's regional in nature."

Tigard Mayor Jerry Edwards said few of his constituents understand what Metro's duties are and tend to regard it as a Portland-based entity that dictates local policies.

"We believe there are regional

issues, but there also are local issues that need to be addressed locally. We urge you to consider that your work will have impacts on local governments, intended or unintended."

Edwards said he wasn't prepared at this point to say what duties he thought Metro ought to have.

Metro was created by state law, and the Legislature specified what its duties would be. Primarily, they are to coordinate regional planning for transportation and solid waste disposal.

The agency also manages public facilities considered to be regional, such as the Washington Park Zoo, the new convention center in Portland, Memorial Coliseum and others.

Last November, voters statewide endorsed an amendment to the state constitution which authorizes "home rule" (as opposed to the current legislative rule) for Metro.

This year's Legislature authorized a 16-member committee to draft a proposed charter for the agency that will be submitted to voters next year, either in May or November.

A charter is similar to a constitution and would spell out precisely what powers Metro is to have—and how it can pay for them.

Should it be empowered to tax residents throughout the region?

As Huffman pointed out, most local governments would like the agency's powers to be limited. But some other people argue that Metro should have more powers because certain problems are regional in nature and can only be solved regionally.

The committee also will have to decide what the organization's structure should be.

For example, the council now consists of 12 members, which unlike other local governments carries the potential for tie votes.

Should there be an odd number?

The Legislature thought so. It already voted to require a 13-member council. That law could be overridden by a vote in favor of the charter. It will go into effect if the charter is rejected.

Washington County has three representatives on the charter

committee. They are former County Board Chairman Wes Myllenbeck of Cedar Hills, attorney Larry Derr of Raleigh Hills and former Sherwood Mayor Mary Tobias.

Tuesday night's hearing was in Beaverton. The committee also took testimony in Milwaukie and Gresham and Portland.



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# OPINION

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## Like it or not, we need Metro

Like it or not, the Metropolitan Service District (Metro) will play an important role in Clackamas County's future livability.

Metro hasn't been particularly popular in Clackamas County lately. And with good reason. Other primary Metro players, Washington and Multnomah Counties already have reaped benefits from the regional governing body.

Multnomah County got its convention center, Washington County got its light-rail line.

Here in Clackamas County, our hopes for a new sports arena were recently dashed and there were hints that promises of dollars for planning a light-rail line along Interstate 205.

However, Clackamas County leaders can ill afford to throw their hands up and brush Metro off.

We need Metro to get important projects off the ground in Clackamas County, and there is some reason to be optimistic that dealings with the organization will improve.

According to the latest indications, Clackamas County will get the \$17+ million it was promised for planning a light-rail line. The money is apparently set aside even if the federal government won't pay for 75 percent of a tunnel Washington County wants to build for its line.

More importantly, Metro will play a big part in funding the End

of the Oregon Trail project.

Fifth District Congressman Mike Kopetski, D-Keizer, said last week that Metro's involvement in the project would be vital to attracting federal dollars.

The regional support Metro could bring to the project likely would add substantial power to Kopetski's lobbying efforts in Washington D.C.

How important is that support? The House Interior Subcommittee on Appropriations received \$80 million worth of requests for funding of projects such as the End of the Oregon Trail nationwide. A total of \$40 million had been allotted for such projects. However, none were funding on the House

side and the dollars were funnelled elsewhere.

The competition for federal dollars will be equally as stiff when the Senate and conference committees consider the issues.

Oregon City and Clackamas County alone are unlikely to represent enough people to make a difference in Washington D.C.

Our congressional representatives also need to be armed with regional and statewide financial support.

Clackamas County leaders are investing increasing amounts of time and effort in Metro issues. Soon, we can expect those efforts to result in Metro finally working for us.