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Carve regional growth pie

The benefits and penalities of growth are distributed unevenly in the metropolitan area. Rena Cusma, executive officer of the Metropolitan Service District, is right on that point stressed in her state of the region address.

The solution lies in some type of a sharing of the tax revenue produced by growth, a device the regional government of the Twin Cities of Minnesota has used for several years to be fair to everyone living under one metropolitan roof.

Thus, Cusma is right again in making tax equity a high priority of her leadership in the year ahead. It fits with such other regional challenges as a home-rule charter for Metro, completion of an urban-growth-management plan, a Tri-Met-Metro merger and further contemplation of adequate sports facilities.

An additional 500,000 people are expected in the next two decades. The machinery is ready to handle growth within the framework of a single region. The urban growth boundary is in place. Metro has regional planning responsibility. Recognition mounts that housing, commerce, industry, transportation, schools and recreation should all be dealt with as one package.

Yet, the region continues to consist of 24 cities, three counties, and a host of school and service districts. If the benefits and penalities of growth are not shared equitably by all of them, the tendency for each to go its own way to attract industry will intensify. Coordination would give way to unhealthy competition.

That is why some form of tax sharing is so important. Forest Grove, for instance, ought not to have to add industry in order to benefit from the industrial tax base located nearby.

The way to make clear to all local governments that they truly all are in regional development together is to share the rewards and responsibilities unencumbered by political boundaries.