



Council of Metropolitan Area
Leagues

Established in 1962 as an ILO
and composed of the
members of local LWVs
in the seven metro counties
Anoka, Carver, Dakota,
Hennepin, Ramsey,
Scott and Washington

CMAL
Board of Directors

Officers
Wes Volkenant, Chair
Karen Schaffer, Vice Chair
Marti Micks, Secretary
Peg DuBord, Treasurer

Directors
Gwen Willems
Jean McMenimen
Joann Ellis
Lindsay Stambaugh
Thana Ross

Greetings to Metro Area League Members & Friends

Thanks to the CMAL Board for their dedication during this transition year, with contributions from both experienced and new members, resulting in valuable ideas and plans.

So, thank you to Karen, Peg, Thana, Marti, Joann, Gwen, Jean, and Lindsay.

At the end of October, Metro Transit General Manager Lesley Kandaras gave an overview of her agency and outlined strategic initiatives.

Speakers discussed budget and financial challenges, including shifts in federal funding. Ling focused on the effects of the potential loss of housing program funds impacting 3,900 Minnesotans, especially in Ramsey County.

Dakota County shared financial hardships, noting inadequate fund balances and rising levies, with actions such as delaying capital projects, slowing hiring, and reevaluating programs.

Modernization was also addressed, with Kevin suggesting changes to property tax systems and exploring regional or state-based human services funding.

Metro Transit prioritizes community service, rider experience, and employee care.

Significant Improvements for Metro Transit

- METRO will expand by 36 miles, adding to its current 87 miles.
- By late 2026, 38% of regional households without a vehicle and
- 28% of all jobs will be within half a mile of a METRO station.

The Watershed Study remains a standing item on each Board meeting agenda. Achieving a comprehensive and high-quality study has taken additional time due to its complexity.

Wes

Wes Volkenant
LWV Anoka Blaine Coon Rapids
CMAL Chair 2025-2027

JANUARY QUARTERLY PROGRAM REVIEW -

THE IMPACT OF FEDERAL FUNDING ON COUNTY GOVERNMENT

County Leaders Strike Cautious Note at CMAL Meeting
Karen Schaffer

I was honored to moderate the January 29 Zoom panel of metro area county leaders. They shared their insights into county finances in light of challenges emanating from the federal government and arising from pressure on the local property-tax base.

We were pleased to have:

- Ling Becker, Ramsey County Manager
- Kevin Corbid, Washington County Administrator
- Will Wallo, Dakota County Finance Director

They spent an hour and a half providing information about their specific plans for navigating the upcoming financial waters, and provided measured comments regarding the challenge of budgeting in their counties in the face of various uncertainties, including federal law changes to Medical Assistance and Federal Nutrition programs, the upcoming state legislative session, union contracts, and concerns about the level of property taxation; including the need to avoid volatility in property-tax levies.

The three leaders highlighted these current strategies for avoiding volatile property taxes:

- Slow down hiring.
- Gradually shift federally funded positions to property-tax levy.
- Increase the county's fund balance by delaying/cancelling capital projects.
- Evaluate popular non-mandated services.
- Implement internal management structures that track external financial impacts (Federal Response Action Team in Ramsey; Incident Command Structure in Dakota; Metro Administrators Group).
- Start annual county budget process earlier and earlier (Ramsey has a two-year budget).
- Work on system modernization.
- Maintain acute awareness that the property-tax system is under stress.
- Reduce infrastructure and overhead through consolidation and regionalization.

Cautions for the future:

- All of the unknowns have the potential for large impacts.
- "Harder years are coming."
- "The rainy day is coming."
- 2027-2028 increased costs could be in the millions.
- "It's a hard year for being in government."

Program areas to keep an eye on for potential federal funding cuts:

- Housing
- Continuum of Care Services
- Public Health
- Emergency Management

Notably, county leaders did not observe immediate costs from Metro Surge. However, some county employees were hesitant to come to work, and certain clients were reluctant to keep appointments; lessons from COVID-era virtual services have proven valuable.

Suggested Resources

- National Association of Counties (NACO) - “The Big Shift: An Analysis of the Local Cost of Federal Cuts.” <https://www.naco.org/resource/big-shift-analysis-local-cost-federal-cuts> recommended by Ling Becker)
- Dakota County Website <https://www.co.dakota.mn.us/Pages/default.aspx>
- Ramsey County Website <https://www.ramseycountymn.gov/>
- Washington County Website <https://www.washingtoncountymn.gov/>
- James, John, Former Minnesota Commissioner of Revenue, “Minnesota’s fiscal system is under serious pressure. Might now be the time to redesign?” Minnesota StarTribune, November 23, 2025, <https://www.startribune.com/mn-human-services-property-taxes-revenue/601529561>
- Watch the recording of the January 29 event https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iIDtnJJLrPQ&list=PLXVK-W7BE4Rz_3Cy5bXa-ReQI6PX3xRpw

ANNUAL MEETING

May 27, 2026

Ridgedale Public Library

12601 Ridgedale Dr, Minnetonka, MN 55305

Robert H. Rohlf Room

- | | |
|-------------|---|
| 5:30 - 6:00 | Social |
| 6:00 - 6:45 | Speaker |
| 6:45 - 7:45 | Business Meeting |
| 8:00 - | Library Closes, and the meeting will be adjourned |

Delegates and Guests

A reminder that each Local League is entitled to send one voting delegate for every 50 members or part thereof.

All LWV members are invited to attend.

RSVP to Attend

If you are planning to attend the Annual Meeting, please click the link below to add your Name, League and Dinner Selection.

- [**RSVP for Attendance and Dinner Selection**](#)

Traffic Issues

Roadwork closures affect I-394 and possibly other routes. Please check traffic before heading out to ensure you arrive at the meeting on time with minimal hassle.

PROPOSED BYLAW CHANGES

The Board is recommending changes to our current Bylaws, which are stated below for your consideration.

Rationale for changes:

1. Leagues can send notifications instantly via email.
2. CMAL and local boards can meet/communicate electronically to discuss proposed nominations, program recommendations, or bylaws changes.
3. This change does not preclude notices going out earlier, as the term “at least” was added to Article VIII proposal and was already in Articles IX and XIV.
4. Board members often serve on their own local league boards, so this gives more flexibility for meeting Annual Convention deadlines for notification.
5. Sometimes, when notice is too far in advance, it gets lost in the emails. Our local leagues only need to give 10 days' notice of proposed changes after we became LLCs.

CMAL Proposed Bylaws Changes to Reduce Length of Notification Time

Note: Current is lined out, with proposed change following.

Article VIII Meetings of CMAL

Section 5 Notice. [last sentence] Nominations for officers and directors shall be provided to delegates ~~six~~ at least two weeks before the annual convention.

Article IX Program

Section 2. The board shall consider any recommendations received from local LWVMN chapters in the metropolitan area at least ~~two months~~ one month before the annual convention and shall formulate a proposed program. The proposed program, including non-recommended items, shall be communicated to the local LWVMN chapters at least ~~six (6) weeks~~ two (2) weeks before the annual convention.

Article XIV Amendments

Any proposed amendment of these bylaws requires the approval of a majority vote and the annual convention, provided that written notice has been sent to each delegate and to presidents of the local LWVMN chapters in the seven-county metropolitan area at least ~~six (6)~~ two (2) weeks in advance of the date of the annual convention at which the proposed amendment is to be considered. Proposed amendments may be sent to the Board by any member at least ~~two (2) months~~ one (1) month in advance of the annual convention at which the proposed amendments are to be considered.

Article XV Dissolution:

No changes to this two-month advance notice requirement.

SLATE OF OFFICERS & DIRECTORS

The Board of Directors is seeking volunteers to serve on the Board. If you are interested in serving, please get in touch with Marti Micks: MicksMartha@gmail.com

MEMBER INTEREST

The Watershed Study is ongoing, however if CMAL members have ideas for other studies or Quarterly Meeting topics, please share them at the Annual Meeting.

CMAL Mailing List

If you would like to be added to the CMAL mailing list, please send your contact information to: LWVCMAL@lwvmn.org