



WHAT'S HAPPENING IN MINNEAPOLIS

A Legislative overview of current issues affecting the city

Twins stadium

What: A joint proposal for a new stadium in Minneapolis by Hennepin County and the Twins was submitted in 2005. The proposal would add a .15 percent sales tax to fund the stadium – three cents on \$20. This would pay for three-quarters of an open-air stadium and the Twins would pay the rest. There would be no state money unless a roof was added; a roof is not part of Hennepin County/Twins proposal.

Now: A judge recently ruled that the Twins may leave the Metrodome after the 2006 season. The Twins are now playing on a season-by-season basis. The governor and Legislature need to approve the new sales tax. The cost of the stadium has gone up \$30 million from the original cost of \$444 million.

If: the proposal was to be approved, then the land would have to be acquired and construction could begin, with a goal of completion by early spring 2008.

If: the state doesn't approve it, the possibility of a new stadium for the Minnesota Twins is over this session. The bigger question is if the Twins will stay here in the long-term.

GMCVA's position: GMCVA Board has taken a supportive position for public financing of a new ballpark for three primary reasons:

1. Good for the visitor industry: fans throughout the five-state area come to Minneapolis for 81 home games – more than any other sport. Fans spend money while here on parking, public transportation, concessions and more.
2. Professional sports contribute to the high quality of life enjoyed by Minneapolis residents and visitors alike.
3. Beyond Minneapolis, the state of Minnesota and the region would see positive impact from a new Twins stadium – the 6.5 percent sales tax on all expenditures goes directly to the State of Minnesota general fund.

Minneapolis smoking ban

What: In the spring of 2005, a "no smoking" ordinance went into effect, making all Minneapolis bars and restaurants 100 percent smoke-free at all times.

Now: Bar owners in some parts of Hennepin County can apply for exemptions to the county's smoking ban if more than half of their gross sales comes from liquor sales and not food. This excludes bars in Minneapolis, Bloomington and Golden Valley. These exemptions will be valid through July 2007.

GMCVA's position: Supported a state-wide ban because having different versions for cities or counties is confusing. However, after the ban was approved, we were involved in the Smoke-free Minneapolis campaign in order to support our member business and help promote restaurants and bars.

Northwest Airlines

What: The Aircraft Mechanics Fraternal Association, which represents Northwest mechanics, is currently on strike. However, the airline is fully operational.

Now: Northwest has assured the Greater Minneapolis Convention & Visitors Association that they are prepared and will continue to fly on a normal schedule. Contingency planning has been underway for a substantial amount of time, which has allowed qualified aircraft mechanics to replace those on strike. The airline has filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy.

It is unlikely clients flying to Minneapolis on Northwest will have problems, however, it's important to remember that travelers won't have as many alternate options to depart or arrive in Minneapolis.

If: Northwest Airlines vanished, ticket prices would likely go up, it's likely that other airlines wouldn't fill the gap and Minneapolis-St. Paul would lose its world-class airport status.

GMCVA's position: Conventions that are currently booked through the GMCVA know the status of NWA and we are in communication to keep them updated.

Northstar Commuter Rail

What: An 82-mile transportation corridor running along highways 10 and 94 from downtown Minneapolis to the St. Cloud/Rice area.

Now: Approved in state bonding bill – \$37.5 million. Congress approved a federal match for dollars. In 2006, the Governor and Legislature will consider funding the balance of the state's commitment – approximately \$50.8 million.

Why needed: The Northstar Corridor is the fastest growing corridor in the state and the third fastest growing in the country.

Next: The initial phase is a 40-mile line estimated to open between 2008-2009. This line would have six stations and estimated daily ridership of 5,600 trips per day.

Central Corridor

What: A primary east-west transportation route spanning 11 miles through the Minneapolis/St. Paul area. It will connect the east metro area with the Hiawatha Light Rail Transit. Three options for the corridor are: improvements to current bus system; bus rapid transit; light rail transit.

Now: State money for the initial part of the project has been received and the corridor will be discussed at next legislative session.

Next: Several issues must be resolved: environmental impact, station/stop sites, minimizing construction impacts, cost/benefit analysis.