

Metropolitan State University's Deliberation Day on Transportation Priorities and Funding Set for March 15, 2008

ST. PAUL, Minn.--([BUSINESS WIRE](#))--Metropolitan State University will host a Deliberation Day on Transportation Priorities and Funding on Saturday, March 15, at its main campus in Saint Paul. This Deliberation Day is the second step in a Deliberative Polling[®] project initiated by Metropolitan State earlier this year.

The Deliberative Polling project at Metropolitan State began with a survey of more than 1,000 metro area residents in February. The survey addressed transportation priorities and funding. Approximately 200 of the total survey respondents accepted Metropolitan State's invitation to attend a follow-up day-long Deliberation Day, at which they will discuss transportation needs, traffic congestion, mass transit, road and bridge safety, maintenance, or expansion, as well as various transportation funding ideas. All participants received briefing materials in advance.

During Deliberation Day, participants will meet in randomly assigned small groups to discuss the issues. They also will have three opportunities during the day to question transportation panels of experts and local policy makers, which will be moderated by Robert Johns, Director, Center for Transportation Studies, Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs, University of Minnesota. At the end of the day, participants will re-take the initial survey, and results will be compared to results of the first survey, representing the most likely priorities of the public at large after being exposed to diverse viewpoints and receiving more information on an issue.

The two questions for Deliberation Day discussion will be:

1. Knowing that public funds are always limited, how should the region prioritize transportation investments?
2. How should regional transportation investments be funded?

The panel of experts will respond to questions on transportation priorities and funding from the small groups. Members of this panel include Margaret Donahoe, Legislative Director for the Minnesota Transportation Alliance; Jim Erkel, Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy; Adeel Lari, Senior Research Fellow at the Humphrey Institute; and Carl Orhn, Policy Analyst, Transportation Planning, Metropolitan Council.

A panel of local policy makers will be seated near the end of the day to respond to small group questions on county, metro and state transportation decision-making. Members of the policy panel include Senator Jim Carlson (D), Co-chair of the Senate Transportation Committee; Representative Mary Liz Holberg (R); Robert McFarlin, Acting Commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Transportation; and Commissioner Tom Workman, Carver County Board of Commissioners.

"Metropolitan State University hopes this project will demonstrate a new way for local leaders to receive informed, broad citizen input on future projects or questions, as well as to provide public input now on transportation," said Frank Schweigert, Ph.D., assistant professor in Metropolitan State University's Master of Public and Nonprofit Administration program. The Metropolitan State Deliberative Polling process was modeled on the work of Prof. James Fishkin at Stanford University, who pioneered Deliberative Polling to demonstrate the change in citizen input after becoming more engaged and informed about an issue. The process has been an effective way to break legislative stalemates on issues as diverse as energy policy in Texas and school segregation in Northern Ireland.

A number of individuals with expertise in transportation advised the university in the planning of this project, including: Robert DeBoer, Director of Policy Development, Citizens League; Johns; Connie Kozlak, System Planning and Programming Manager, Transportation Planning, Metropolitan Council; Lee Munnich, Jr., Senior Fellow, Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs, University of Minnesota; Orhn; Clarence Shallbetter, contributor to Citizens League and Civic Caucus transportation reports; and Amy Vennewitz, Deputy Director for Finance and Planning, Transportation Planning, Metropolitan Council.

The Metropolitan State Deliberative Polling project is being led by Schweigert and Susan Shumer, Director, Community Outreach, Civic Engagement and The Center for Community-Based Learning, with sponsorship from the American Association of State Colleges and Universities. It is being funded with grants received from the F.R. Bigelow Foundation, the Saint Paul Foundation and Metropolitan State University President's Special Initiative Fund.

Metropolitan State University (www.metrostate.edu), a member of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System, provides high-quality, affordable academic and professional degree programs at the bachelor's, master's and doctoral levels. It is the only state university in the Twin Cities metropolitan area.

Note to Editors: Media are welcome to attend all or part of Deliberation Day, which begins at 8:30 a.m. and runs until 5:00 p.m. The program will take place in the Great Hall at Metropolitan State University, 700 East 7th Street, Saint Paul, Minn.

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