



On Friday, March 11, members and guests of the Scott County Association for Leadership and Efficiency (SCALE) gathered for a meeting that featured a legislative update; a comprehensive presentation on transit opportunities, developments, and issues within the larger community; and the official election of the 2011-2012 SCALE officers.

In her final meeting as Chair, Savage **Mayor Janet Williams** opened the meeting with the introduction of the new District 4 Metropolitan Council member, **Gary Van Eyll**, who had been formally sworn in on Wednesday, March 9. Councilmember Van Eyll – who hails from Chaska – represents Carver County, Scott County, and a small portion of western Hennepin County.

Scott County lobbyist **John Boland** then provided a brief overview of recent legislative developments, noting that "... overall, the state's budget is still the big issue." Adding that the House and Senate leadership had released their budget targets on Thursday, March 10, Boland stated that most of the legislature's attention will be focused on getting more specific. "How this will all end up affecting local government is still up in the air," he said, but also explained that cuts to Local Government Aid (LGA) and County Program Aid (CPA) are present in both chambers' budget target documents. After a brief summary of the SCALE legislative priorities' progress, he responded to a member question about any activity regarding the elimination of duplication in state government services: "There are a lot of bills that have been introduced to speed up, reduce, or remove regulations; in addition, there's been a lot of discussion regarding state agency duplication," Boland responded.

Scott County Deputy Administrator **Lezlie Vermillion** then introduced the morning's primary topic, transit. Beginning with an abbreviated history of public transit in Scott County, Vermillion ended her introduction with a summary of the many transit-related accomplishments that have been realized to date: the creation of the County's express commuter bus line to downtown Minneapolis, BlueXpress; the merger and expansion of Scott and Carver County Dial-A-Ride Service, SmartLink; and the opening and/or planned opening of three transit stations. "Of course, none of this would have been possible without the partnerships forged among Scott County, Carver County, Prior Lake, Shakopee, Savage, Jordan, Elko New Market, the SMSC, the Minnesota Valley Transit Authority (MVTA), and the Metropolitan Council, among others," she added.

Scott County Transit Manager **Troy Beam** then summarized SmartLink's early philosophy, creation, and its subsequent success – in terms of both ridership expansion and satisfaction as well as cost efficiencies. From its earliest days of Dial-A-Ride provision, SmartLink is now the Carver/Scott region's official ADA and Medical Assistance transport provider, saving an estimated \$130,000 in its first year alone. Prior Lake Building and Transportation Services Director **Jane Kansier** then presented information about BlueXpress' developments, including the addition of more reverse commute options, an expansion of routes, the acquisition of new buses, and the addition of over 2,000 new riders in recent months. "This year, we've planned a new stop at Mystic Lake and we're working with MVTA on the possibility of a new south-of-the-river stop," Kansier concluded.

Shakopee Community Development Director **Michael Leek** then reviewed the issues, concerns, and recommendations put forth in a recent Legislative Auditor's report on public transit in the metropolitan region. Noting that radically altering the existing transit governance structure may not be the most pressing legislative issue this year, Leek did add that "... this report has generated a lot of interest, and a lot of discussion." Briefly summarizing the report's articulated concerns over the current "fragmentation and complexity" in transit governance, distrust between and among some of the existing transit organizations, and no universally accepted set of priorities for the region, Leek spent the preponderance of his time discussing the report's general recommendations. "The key legislative recommendations put forth by this report are that the Metropolitan Council should be restructured (reinstating staggered terms and establishing a mix of elected and appointed members), the expansion of the transit taxing district, the clarification of transit goals and priorities for the region, and the lifting of the restriction on studying the Dan Patch corridor," he stated.

*The full presentation will soon be available on the SCALE website at [www.scaleinfo.org](http://www.scaleinfo.org).*

Before a short update on the spring flooding outlook by Scott County Emergency Management Director **Chris Weldon**, the members' last official action of the morning was in the unanimous election of Prior Lake **Mayor Mike Myser** as Chair, Louisville Township Clerk **LuAnne Lemke** as Vice Chair, and Jordan City Councilmember **Joe Thill** as Treasurer for the 2011-2012 year. In turn, the members applauded outgoing Chair Janet Williams and Savage City Administrator **Barry Stock** for their dedicated service over the past year.

Next month's SCALE meeting will be held on **Friday, April 8 at 7:30 a.m.** at Prior Lake City Hall.