

MINNESOTA

Minnesota ranks 8th among the states in number of local governments with 3,526 as of October 2007.

COUNTY GOVERNMENTS (87)

There are no areas in Minnesota lacking county government. The county governing body is called the county board of commissioners.

SUBCOUNTY GENERAL PURPOSE GOVERNMENTS (2,642)

The 2,642 subcounty general purpose governments in Minnesota comprise 854 municipal (city) governments and 1,788 township or town governments.

Municipal Governments (854)

The term "municipality," as defined for census statistics on governments, applies only to the cities in Minnesota. Towns or townships in Minnesota are counted as township governments and not as municipal governments in census statistics on governments.

Minnesota cities are divided into four classes according to population size, as follows:

- First class - more than 100,000 inhabitants
- Second class - more than 20,000 and not more than 100,000 inhabitants
- Third class - more than 10,000 and not more than 20,000 inhabitants
- Fourth class - not more than 10,000 inhabitants

"Charter cities" are municipal governments that have adopted home-rule charters. All other municipal governments, including those that were villages on January 1, 1974, are "statutory cities." There are no differences between cities that would affect their classification for census purposes. Some, but not all, cities exist within township areas.

Township Governments (1,788)

Township governments exist in 85 of the 87 Minnesota counties. In those counties that have township governments, township governments do not cover the entire area of such counties. All unorganized territory and some, but not all, cities exist outside the area served by any township government. In recent years, some township governments in Minnesota have been dissolved. The terms "town" and "township" are used interchangeably in Minnesota with regard to township governments. The township governing body is the board of supervisors.

A number of metropolitan area towns, or urban towns, have powers similar to those of municipal governments under special powers granted by the Minnesota statutes.

PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEMS (341)

School District Governments (341)

The following types of school districts in Minnesota are counted as separate governments for census purposes:

- Common school districts
- Independent school districts
- Special school districts (special acts)

An elected board administers each school district of the above three types. School districts may levy school taxes and issue bonds. The Pine Point School, part of Pine Point School District, is administered by the White Earth Reservation Tribal Council under special legislation.

Dependent Public School Systems (0)

Secondary Cooperative Facilities Districts

These districts operate joint schools. The districts are created by a joint powers agreement between two or more school districts. A board consisting of representatives of the member school district boards governs each district. The districts may levy a property tax and issue general obligation bonds with

voter approval. The districts are classified as dependent activities of their member school districts.

Other Educational Activities

Minnesota has the following types of educational service agencies in operation:

- Area learning centers
- Education districts
- Interdistrict councils (under Joint Powers Act)
- Intermediate school districts
- Regional management information centers
- Service cooperatives
- Vocational centers (cooperative centers for vocational education)

Area learning centers to provide vocational education to secondary school pupils with special needs may be established by a school district either alone or in cooperation with other public or private entities. For census purposes, they are not counted as separate governments but are joint educational service agencies of the school districts they serve.

Education districts to provide educational and school support services to participating school districts may be established by agreement between four or more school districts. A board of appointed representatives of the participating school districts governs each education district; these representatives serve at the pleasure of the school district they represent. Education districts may levy ad valorem taxes and issue bonds after voter approval. School districts may pair up, as enhanced pairing districts, to certify some tax levies jointly and to perform other functions jointly. Education districts are not counted as separate governments.

Interdistrict councils are organized under the Joint Powers Act. These councils are established by agreement between two or more school districts, to exercise powers common to the contracting parties. Most of the education agreements formed under this law provide special education services. The agreement determines whether there is a separate governing body. Interdistrict councils (under the Joint Powers Act) are not counted as separate governments. Similar provisions

can apply to special education cooperative districts and telecommunications districts.

Intermediate school districts are established by special acts to provide technical colleges or special education. A joint board, consisting of appointed representatives of each participating school district, governs each intermediate school district. These districts may levy ad valorem taxes and issue bonds. They are not counted as separate governments.

Regional management information centers may be formed by two or more independent, special, or common school districts. The districts provide a computer based financial management accounting system to school districts, utilizing regional or other computing facilities. They are not counted as separate governments.

General law, under the state education code, authorizes service cooperatives, which serve all forms of local government with planning and regional services and programs. Service cooperatives formed under general law, rather than under the Joint Powers Act, are not counted as separate governments.

Vocational centers (also called cooperative centers for vocational education), which provide vocational education and other educational services, are established by resolutions of two or more independent school districts. They are not counted as separate governments for census purposes.

SPECIAL DISTRICT GOVERNMENTS (456)

Minnesota statutes authorize the creation of a variety of special districts or authorities that are counted as governments. These are discussed in detail below.

Area Ambulance Districts

Created by special acts of the legislature, these districts provide ambulance service to their area. They are governed by boards appointed by member cities, towns, and counties. Districts may levy ad valorem property taxes and issue bonds.

Area Redevelopment Agencies

These agencies may be established by joint powers agreement between two or more municipalities. A joint board consisting of one member appointed by the Governor and the remainder by the municipalities served governs each agency. The agency may collect fees, rentals, and charges; issue bonds; and, with approval of the municipalities served, levy ad valorem taxes and special assessments.

The Moorhead-Clay County Area Redevelopment Agency was created by special act with similar provisions.

These agencies are to be distinguished from the municipal redevelopment agencies listed under "Subordinate Agencies and Areas," below.

East Lake Clinic District

A 1989 special act authorizes creation of this district by resolution of the towns of Crystal Bay, Beaver Bay, and Stony River; the cities of Beaver Bay and Silver Bay; and the county of Lake. The district board consists of one representative from each of the participating governments. The district may levy ad valorem taxes and fix charges for its services.

Hospital Districts

Municipal hospital districts, authorized by 1959 legislation, may be established by resolution of the governing bodies of any two or more contiguous cities (except first class) or townships. A referendum is required if requested by the voters. Each district hospital board consists of one member elected from each constituent government plus one member elected at large. The boards may collect charges for services, levy taxes, and, with voter approval, issue revenue and general obligation bonds.

A few county hospital districts have also been established by special acts with generally similar provisions.

Housing and Redevelopment Authorities

General law provides for the establishment of a

housing and redevelopment authority in each municipality and county, other than counties that have an authority established by special act. Establishment requires a resolution of the respective governing body and a public hearing. Multicounty authorities may also be established by two or more cities or counties. Each authority is administered by a board of commissioners appointed by the mayor with the consent of the municipal governing body or by the county governing body, as appropriate. Authorities may issue revenue bonds and may fix and collect rentals. A special benefit property tax may be levied with the approval of the establishing government.

Special acts authorize city governing bodies to serve as housing authority commissioners ex officio in a few localities. A housing authority governed by the city governing body is not counted as a separate government. See "Subordinate Agencies and Areas," below.

Joint Cable Communications Commissions

Two or more counties, cities, or towns may form a joint cable communications commission by ordinance or resolution. Each commission consists of two representatives from each member government; one of the two representatives must be a member of the local governing body. The commissions grant franchises and set rates.

Joint Powers Airport Boards

These boards may be created by agreement by two or more municipalities; the state and one or more municipalities; one or more municipalities and another states; or, with the approval of the federal government, the state of Minnesota and Canada. The boards are appointed by the participating governments. The participating governments levy taxes and issue bonds to provide funding per the agreement.

Joint Powers Boards

Two or more local governments or other political subdivisions of the state may jointly exercise any power common to them. Federal and state governments also may participate in such agreements. The agreement may create

a board; the composition of such a board is specified in the creating agreement. The functions performed by and the powers granted to these joint powers boards are spelled out in the creating agreement. Joint powers boards may receive contributions from participating governments and, if the agreement so provides, fix charges and issue revenue bonds. Joint powers boards are known by a wide variety of names.

Community correction boards are created pursuant to the Joint Exercise of Powers Act; however, legislation limits the creation of these entities to within to one or more contiguous counties having an aggregate population of 30,000 or more. These boards have an advisory board in addition to the governing board.

Regional radio boards also are created pursuant to the Joint Exercise of Powers Act; however, legislation requires that these agreements may be created only by two or more counties or a city and one or counties and that the counties must be within the statewide radio board's project plan. Legislation also provides specific requirements for the board's composition.

Mental Health Collaboratives

State laws authorize two types of mental health collaboratives: family services collaboratives and children's mental health collaboratives. In most cases, the two types of collaboratives are integrated. These entities are formed by combinations of public entities, and also private entities, that form an agreement. The collaboratives are governed by representatives of the member agencies. The agreement specifies member contributions.

Metropolitan Airports Commission

This commission was created by special legislation to provide, operate, and maintain airports in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area. The commission consists of the mayors of Minneapolis and St. Paul plus 13 additional members (including the chair) appointed by the Governor. The commission may set rates, collect fees and rents, levy ad valorem taxes, and issue revenue bonds.

Metropolitan Mosquito Control District

The special act establishing this district designates the participating counties. The district is governed by a commission composed of members of the boards of county commissioners from each of the participating counties. The district may levy ad valorem taxes. In addition, participating counties may levy ad valorem taxes on behalf of the district.

Metropolitan Radio Board

This board converted to a regional radio board in 2004. Regional radio boards are described under Joint Powers Boards.

Minneapolis-St. Paul Housing Finance Board

This board was established by a joint exercise of powers agreement between the Minneapolis Community Development Agency and the Housing and Redevelopment Authority of St. Paul to provide mortgage credit. The composition of the board is specified in the agreement establishing it. The board may fix fees and charges for its services and may issue revenue bonds.

Municipal Gas Agencies

Municipal gas agencies, which provide and distribute gas, are established when two or more cities file a written agreement with the secretary of state. A board of directors, of which at least five directors represent the participating cities, governs each agency. The agencies may charge rents, rates, and other fees and may issue revenue bonds. No municipal gas agencies were reported in operation in October 2007.

Municipal Power Agencies

Municipal power agencies are established by written agreement between two or more member cities, upon resolution of the respective city governing bodies, to generate and distribute electric power. A park and recreation board of a first-class city also may participate in establishing a municipal power agency. A board, consisting of representatives of the governing bodies of the member cities,

governs each agency. The number of representatives per city and their manner of selection are specified in the agreement establishing the agency. Municipal power agencies may impose service charges and issue revenue bonds.

Park Districts

Park districts are authorized under a general law applicable only to counties with 350,000 or more inhabitants; adjoining counties may also be included in the district. Establishment is by the board of county commissioners following petition of voters or resolutions adopted by a majority of the governing bodies of the cities within each county in the proposed district; local referendum is required if petitioned for or if the county commissioners so desire.

Single-county park districts, created under this law, are coterminous with the county but exclude first-class cities. Multicounty park districts may include all or part of two or more counties, exclusive of first-class cities. An elected board of park district commissioners governs each district. The district may fix charges, issue revenue bonds, and, with voter approval, issue general obligation bonds. The district may also determine the amount to be contributed by each participating government; these funds are raised by the local governments through property taxes. The Three Rivers Park District was established under this law to provide park facilities in Hennepin County.

Regional Development Commissions

These commissions, which coordinate state, federal, and local planning and development programs, are established by the Governor following petition by a combination of the governing bodies of the cities and counties representing a majority of the population residing in the development region. Each commission consists of members chosen from local governing bodies, councils of governments, Native American Tribal Councils, and public interest groups. The commission by-laws specify the method of selection of board members. Regional development commissions may levy property taxes.

Regional Public Library Districts

Regional public library districts may be established in the areas of the Great River Regional Library System and the East Central Regional Library System. These districts are governed by boards consisting of elected directors, and, in some cases, include ex officio members of the governing bodies of the participating counties. The districts may levy property taxes and issue debt.

Regional Public Library Systems

Regional library systems are formed by agreement between two or more counties and/or cities located in two or more counties under the interlocal cooperation act, after approval by existing library boards. The system is governed by representatives appointed by member governments as specified in the agreement. The system receives statutorily prescribed funding from member governments and the proceeds of an earmarked library tax.

Regional Railroad Authorities

Regional railroad authorities to preserve and improve local freight or passenger rail service may be established by resolution adopted by the governing body of one or more counties, after application to the secretary of state. Cities and towns may organize a regional railroad authority if the county in which they are located declines to do so. A board of five or more commissioners governs each authority. The number of commissioners appointed by each member county is specified in the certificate of incorporation. The authorities may charge fees and rentals and issue revenue bonds; with voter approval, the authorities may levy ad valorem taxes.

Authorities of this type that are governed by the county board of commissioners ex officio are not counted as separate special district governments. See "Subordinate Agencies and Areas," below.

Rural Development Financing Authorities

Authorities to acquire, construct, and improve agricultural development and improvement

projects are established by resolution of one or more counties. A board of directors, appointed by the county governing bodies of the counties served, governs each authority. The authorities may fix charges for their services, levy special assessments, and issue revenue bonds.

The Morrison County Rural Development Finance Authority was created by a special act.

Authorities governed by the county commissioners ex officio are not counted as separate governments. See "Subordinate Agencies and Areas," below.

Rural Water User Districts

Rural water user districts to conserve, store, and distribute water may be established under general law upon petition of landowners to the state district court. If the district includes an area within a city, then the petition must include a resolution of the city governing body. A board of directors, elected by persons and corporations party to contracts for water with the district, governs each district. The districts may impose service charges and issue revenue bonds.

St. Cloud Metropolitan Transit Commission

The St. Cloud Metropolitan Transit Commission was established by a 1969 law. It consists of members appointed by the governing bodies of the participating municipalities. The commission may issue revenue bonds, impose charges, and levy ad valorem taxes.

Sanitary Districts

Sanitary districts may be established by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency upon petition of the governing bodies of one or more county, municipal, or township governments. A board of managers, selected by the governing bodies of the constituent governments, governs each district. The districts may fix service charges; set ad valorem taxes and special assessments; and issue bonds. Similar provisions apply to the Western Lake Superior Sanitary District and Cross Lake Area Water and Sanitary Sewer District, which were established by special

acts.

Regional sanitary sewer districts are created by special acts, with substantially uniform provisions, that enumerate the cities and townships included therein. A board of directors, with one member appointed by the governing body of each participating city or township, governs each district. The districts may fix service charges; levy ad valorem taxes and special assessments; and issue bonds.

Soil and Water Conservation Districts

Soil and water conservation districts are created by the state soil and water conservation board upon petition of landowners and after public hearing and referendum. An elected board of supervisors governs each district. The board may require contributions from benefited landowners. In addition, the county may levy ad valorem taxes and issue bonds for the benefit of a district.

Solid Waste Management Districts

Solid waste management districts may be established by the commissioner of the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency following petition from the governing bodies of at least half the counties that lie wholly or in part within the proposed district. Each participating government appoints two members to the district board of directors. The districts may charge fees and issue revenue bonds. The districts may levy property taxes and issue general obligation bonds if the participating counties agree to permanently delegate this power.

Watershed Districts

These districts provide flood control, reclamation, water supply, sewerage, drainage, and soil and water conservation. General law authorizes the state board of soil and water resources to establish watershed districts upon petition of landowners or participating local governments, after public hearing. The governing body is a board of managers, appointed by the county boards of commissioners. The district boards may levy special benefit assessments and ad valorem taxes, impose storm water charges, and issue

revenue bonds. The participating counties are statutorily required to pay a share of projects and may levy taxes and issue bonds for such purpose.

Watershed Management Organizations

Watershed districts that are wholly within the area over which the Metropolitan Council has jurisdiction or that were created under the Joint Powers Act are watershed management organizations. The organizations are governed by a board as specified by the watershed district law or the Joint Powers Act. Watershed management organizations may levy property taxes and issue bonds. Participating local governments are required to fund apportioned costs.

SUBORDINATE AGENCIES AND AREAS

Shown below are various governmental designations in Minnesota that have certain characteristics of governmental units but that are classified in census statistics on governments as subordinate agencies of the state or local governments and are not counted as governments. Legal provisions for some of the larger of these are discussed below (see "Public School Systems," above, regarding educational agencies of this nature).

Among the subordinate agencies and areas listed below, some represent "special taxing areas" within the territory of an established government. This method of financing additional services in limited areas by property taxation, while also used by some municipal and township governments in a few states, is more widely utilized by county governments. In the listing below of authorized county-related agencies, a bullet (*) appears for each entity of this kind--i.e., any that may individually serve a portion rather than all of a county and for which a tax may be levied against the assessed value of property in the areas served.

Metropolitan Council (state). The Metropolitan Council was created by a special act primarily to coordinate planning and development, operate transit, and sewage disposal systems in the Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan area. It has been given broad powers to review and require consistency and

compatibility of all comprehensive plans of governments in the seven-county area. The council consists of 17 members appointed by the Governor. It may levy ad valorem taxes and may issue bonds.

Minnesota Higher Education Facilities

Authority (state). This authority was created by 1971 legislation to finance the construction of higher education facilities. A board consisting of a representative of the Minnesota Office of Higher Education and eight members appointed by the Governor governs the authority. The authority may fix rates, rents, fees, and charges for its services and may issue revenue bonds.

Minnesota Housing Finance Agency (state).

This agency, authorized by an act of the legislature, was created to provide mortgage credit for low- and moderate-income housing and related improvements. A board of seven members governs the agency; the board consists of six members appointed by the Governor with the consent of the senate plus the state auditor. The agency may set fees and charges, make mortgage loans, and issue revenue bonds.

Port authorities (municipal). General law authorizes the establishment of these authorities in cities of the first class and also elsewhere by special act. A port commission appointed by the city council governs each authority, except where special acts specify otherwise. Contiguous first-class cities may establish joint port commissions. Port authorities may levy ad valorem taxes and may fix rates, fees, and charges. The city council may levy additional taxes and issue bonds, at its discretion, for port authority needs. The port commission may issue revenue bonds and, with city approval, may issue general obligation bonds. Industrial development districts within port authorities are classified as dependent agencies of the establishing authority and are not counted as separate governments.

Other examples include:

State¹

Lake Superior Center Authority
Minnesota Agricultural and Economic

Development Board
Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
Minnesota Public Facilities Authority
Minnesota Technology Inc.
Mississippi River Parkway Commission
Northern Technology Initiative Inc
Rural Finance Authority
St. Paul Landmark Authority
Wildfire protection districts

County

Benson/Swift County Hospital District
Community public health boards
Cook County and Grand Marais Joint
Economic Development Authority
County water and sewer districts
Drainage authorities (county and judicial
ditches)
Emergency medical services special taxing
districts
Hennepin Healthcare System Inc.
Human services boards
Joint powers boards of health
Koochiching County Economic Development
Commission
*Lake improvement districts
Minnesota Ballpark Authority
Mississippi Headwaters Board
Park commissions
Regional railroad authorities governed by the
county board of commissioners
*Road districts in unorganized territory
Rural development financing authorities with
ex officio boards
*Subordinate service districts

Municipal

Chisholm/Hibbing Airport Authority
City development districts
City library boards (first-class cities)
City-school district library boards (first-class
cities)
Duluth Airport Authority
Duluth Transit Authority
Economic development authorities and districts
Emergency medical services special taxing

districts
Housing and redevelopment authorities with ex
officio boards
Joint powers board of health
Lake Minnetonka Conservation District (in
Hennepin County)
Local public health boards
Minneapolis Community Development Agency
Municipal redevelopment agencies
Neighborhood revitalization policy boards (first-
class cities)
St. Paul Public Housing Agency
Special service districts
Spirit Mountain Recreation Area Authority
Storm sewer improvement districts
Tax increment financing districts (may also be
dependent on a special district)
Urban and rural service (taxing) districts

Township

Emergency medical services special taxing
districts
Road districts (in areas having organized
township governments)
Special fire protection districts
Subordinate service districts

Joint Municipal-Township

Joint East Range Economic Development
Authority (St. Louis and Lake counties)
White Bear Lake Conservation District

Other

The Metropolitan Parks and Open Space
Commission is classified as a dependent
activity of the Metropolitan Council.

Minnesota laws also provide for various types
of local areas for election purposes and
administration of justice.

1. The Greater Minnesota Corporation was
renamed Minnesota Technology Inc.