

DATE: May 19, 2009

TO: David Eichenthal

FROM: Caprill Hacker

RE: 2006 Survey on Metro Government

In 2006, the Community Research Council, now The Ochs Center for Metropolitan Studies, conducted a survey of 1,000 residents of Hamilton County for its *2006 State of Chattanooga Region Report*. Respondents were asked about many aspects of life in Hamilton County including their opinions concerning a potential combined Hamilton County-City of Chattanooga Government. Concerning this subject, the following question was asked, "Some people have suggested that instead of having both a city government for Chattanooga and a county government for all of Hamilton County, there should be a single metro government that combines both. Would you say you favor or oppose combining Hamilton County and Chattanooga City Government into one unit, or aren't you sure about this?" Overall, 40.3% of respondents favored combining Hamilton County and Chattanooga City Government and 36.0% were opposed to the single metro government.

Respondents were also asked about the impact of such a combined system, including taxes, the potential for job growth, growth management and planning, the quality of local government services, local government savings, and local government efficiency and responsiveness. Responses of almost certain and very likely occurred as follows when respondents were asked about these possible impacts of a single metropolitan government:

- ∞ 56.3% responded that taxes will increase
- ∞ 28.7% responded that the region will be able to attract more jobs
- ∞ 28.2% responded that metro and countywide growth management and planning will improve
- ∞ 26.0% responded that the quality of local government services will go down
- ∞ 24.5% responded that local government will be more efficient and responsive
- ∞ 23.8% responded that local government will save money.

Favorability:

Favorability for a single metropolitan government was highest among men ages 45-59, Blacks and Non-Whites, respondents with higher levels of educational attainment, respondents with income

above \$50,000 per year, residents with a shorter tenure in Chattanooga, and city residents.

Among respondents, Blacks (44.5%) and Non-Whites (43.0%) were more likely than Whites (39.4%) to favor a single metropolitan government. Men (43.7%) were also more likely than women (37.2%) to favor metro government. Men (49.5%) and women ages 45-59 (39.3%) were more likely to favor a metro government than their counterparts between the ages of 18 and 44 and 60 and older. By gender and race, White men (44.0%) are most likely to favor metro government followed closely by Non-White women (43.2%) and Non-White men (42.6%). Only 34.7% of white women responded favorably toward metro government. Respondents with some college or more education favored metro government more than respondents with a high school education or less. Support for metro government was higher among respondents with incomes greater than \$50,000 per year (44.1%). Support was also high among respondents with incomes less than \$20,000 per year (42.5%), \$60,000-\$99,0000 per year (41.5%), and \$100,000 or greater per year (54.7%). Respondents who have lived less than a quarter of their lives in Chattanooga were more likely to support metro government than individuals who have spent more than a quarter of their lives in the Chattanooga area. Opposition to metro government was strongest in the following regions: Ooltewah (53.4%), Soddy Daisy Area (61.9%), and Hixson (38.6%). Chattanooga City residents (47.7%) were more favorable to metro government than non-Chattanooga residents (34.1%), i.e. residents of other incorporated towns in Hamilton County or residents of Hamilton County outside of a town.

Impact:

Race, education, income, city residence, and regional residence continue to be important factors in the survey responses when considering the impact of a combined Hamilton County-Chattanooga City Government.

Of White respondents, 54.3% responded that taxes will increase as a result of a metro government compared to 64.1% of Blacks and 62.2% of Non-Whites. A higher percentage of Blacks (40.1%) and Non-Whites (36.9%) than Whites (25.8%) responded that the region will be able to attract more jobs. Blacks (31.7%) and Non-Whites (29.5%) were also more likely than Whites (27.7%) to respond that metro and countywide growth management and planning will improve. Of Black and Non-White respondents, 28.7% and 29.4%, respectively, responded that local government will be more efficient and responsive under a metro system. These groups were also more likely to respond that local government will save money (Blacks

29.6%; Non-Whites 26.8%). Whites (26.1%) were more likely to respond that the quality of local government services will go down under a metro system than Blacks (20.4%) and Non-Whites (25.7%).

Respondents with a high school education or less are most likely to respond that the following impacts of a metro government are very likely or almost certain: taxes will increase (64.0%), the region will be able to attract more jobs (32.2%), the quality of local government services will go down (30.7%), and local government will save money (25.8%). College graduates are most likely to respond that it is almost certain or very likely that metro and countywide growth management and planning will improve (31.6%) as a result of a combined government. College graduates (26.6%) were most likely to respond that it is almost certain or very likely that local government will be more efficient and responsive as a result of metro government. Only 20.4% of post graduates, however, responded very likely or almost certain to the same question compared to 25.0% of both respondents with some college and respondents with a high school education or less.

Respondents that have an income of less than \$50,000 per year were more likely to respond that the following effects of a metro government are very likely or almost certain: taxes will increase (58.0%) the region will be able to attract more jobs (30.3%), and the quality of local government services will go down (27.5%). Respondents that have an income of less than \$20,000 per year were most likely to respond that it is very likely or almost certain that the region will be able to attract more jobs (35.0%) and the quality of local government services will go down (34.1%) as the result of a single metro government.

Respondents that are city residents were more likely to respond that the following impacts are very likely or almost certain as the result of a metro government: the region will be able to attract more jobs (34.4%), metro and countywide growth management and planning will improve (34.0%), local government will be more efficient and responsive (30.0%), and local government will save money (27.1%). Respondents that live in other incorporated towns were most likely to respond that it is very likely or almost certain that the quality of local government services will go down (33.1%). A majority of respondents that live outside of Chattanooga (61.5%) responded that it is very likely or almost certain that taxes will increase as a result of metro government.

**Place of
Residence**

Very Likely or Almost Certain:	Overall	Chattanooga	Total Non-Chattanooga	Other Incorp Towns	Outside a Town
Taxes will increase	56.3%	50.4%	61.5%	60.1%	64.3%
The region will be able to attract more jobs	28.7%	34.4%	23.5%	26.0%	18.6%
Metro and countywide growth management and planning will improve	28.2%	34.0%	22.7%	23.3%	21.4%
The quality of local government services will go down	26.0%	20.0%	32.6%	33.1%	31.4%
Local government will be more efficient and responsive	24.5%	30.0%	20.2%	22.2%	16.1%
Local government will save money	23.8%	27.1%	21.8%	21.7%	22.0%

The responses of Ooltewah area, Soddy Daisy area, and Chattanooga 2 residents indicate that they are most concerned about the impact of a metro governmental system. Of respondents in the Ooltewah and Soddy Daisy areas, 71.2% and 79.2%, respectively, responded that it is very likely or almost certain that taxes will increase under a metro system. Residents of these areas are least optimistic about the potential of a metro system to attract new jobs with only 16.0% and 18.7%, respectively, responding that this impact is almost certain or very likely. Respondents in the Soddy Daisy area were least likely to be optimistic that metro and countywide planning and growth management will improve (11.8%), local government will be more efficient and responsive (11.6%),

and local government will save money (18.1%). Soddy Daisy area residents are also the least optimistic about the future of local government services under a combined system; 45.4% responded that it is very likely or almost certain that the quality of local government services will go down under a metro government. Also, notable are the responses of residents of the Chattanooga 2 area. Only 17.1% responded that it is very likely or almost certain that local government will be more efficient and responsive. In addition, only 19.5% of Ooltewah respondents said that it is very likely or almost certain that local government will save money under a metro system.

Region

Very likely or almost certain:	Chattanooga (East Brainerd)	Ooltewah Area	Soddy Daisy Area	Hixson	Red Bank/ North Chattanooga	Chatt 1 (DT Area)	East Ridge/Chatt-Brainerd	Chatt 2
Taxes will increase	48.7%	71.2%	79.2%	43.3%	49.4%	53.7%	53.5%	54.6%
The region will be able to attract more jobs	39.1%	16.0%	18.7%	25.1%	33.9%	41.1%	27.0%	31.7%
Metro and countywide growth management and planning will improve	36.3%	24.4%	11.8%	25.1%	36.9%	35.9%	29.6%	29.4%
The quality of local government services will go down	15.5%	28.9%	45.4%	20.5%	22.8%	26.1%	25.1%	24.0%
Local government will be more efficient and responsive	27.5%	20.2%	11.6%	24.6%	29.9%	34.9%	31.2%	17.1%
Local government will save money	29.2%	19.5%	18.1%	24.5%	28.1%	29.0%	25.2%	21.3%