

Metro Cities Hosts Virtual Annual Meeting

Metro Cities hosted a virtual Annual Meeting on Thursday afternoon, attended by 70 city officials from throughout the metropolitan area. Thank you to all who attended the meeting to conduct the elections of Metro Cities' Board officers and members. President Mark McNeill presided as Chair and President McNeill and Vice President Myron Bailey provided remarks at the meeting. League of MN Cities President Mike Mornson also spoke briefly to thank Metro Cities for its partnership with the League.

Member city officials elected Myron Bailey, Mayor of the City of Cottage Grove as President, and Lisa Laliberte, Councilmember-City of Roseville, as Vice-President. Jeffrey Dahl, City Manager for the City of Wayzata, was elected to the Board. In addition, Steve Fletcher-Councilmember, Minneapolis, Mary Hamann Roland-Mayor, Apple Valley, Tom McCarty-City Administrator, Stillwater, and Matt Stemwedel-City Administrator, Coon Rapids, were re-elected to second terms. Terms for new Board officers and members take effect July 1. Congratulations to all new Board officers, re-elected and new members!

Governor Extends Stay-At-Home Order to May 18

[Executive Order 40-48](#), released Thursday, extends the Stay at Home Order, with a few modifications. Bars, restaurants, and public accommodations are closed (or open only for curbside pickup). The extension allows additional retail businesses to reopen for curbside pickup and delivery. The administration estimates that this change will put up to 30,000 Minnesotans back to work. Salons and barbershops are included, but only to sell retail products. As was the case for the Governor's [order last week](#) allowing certain industrial, manufacturing, and office-based businesses to return to work, retail businesses affected by Executive Order 40-48 will be required to prepare a COVID-19 Preparedness Plan.

The order outlines this specific guidance for the expanded reopening:

- All customer-facing retail establishments are eligible for curbside delivery/pickup, starting next Monday (5/4).
- Every business must develop and post a plan for how to do so; template available online.
- Online payment should be used in every possible scenario.
- Employees and customers should wear masks and protective equipment.
- Social distancing guidelines apply in curbside pickup scenarios. Customers should not leave their vehicles if possible.
- In delivery scenarios, items should be deposited outside a customer's residence.

More guidance can be found on the [DEED website](#).

Below are highlights from the Wednesday and Thursday briefings from Governor Walz. See the state's [COVID-19 web page](#) for the latest specific health data.

Wednesday:

Updates were provided by the Minnesota Department of Health's Commissioner and Director of Infectious Disease Epidemiology, Prevention, and Control, Kris Ehresmann on state infection rates, and testing capacity needs. Joe Kelly, Director of Homeland Security and Emergency

Management, spoke about arrangements for the potential use of temporary hospital facilities to open additional intensive care capacity.

Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED), Steve Grove gave an update on the expansion of the unemployment insurance program and the department's framework for getting more businesses back to work. He referenced two resources, a [MN Symptom Screener](#) developed by MNIT, Target, and the MN Safety Council to help employers assess the health of their workforce each day through non-personal, anonymized health data. He also stated Target has made no-touch infrared thermometers available to businesses at wholesale cost. More information can be found on the [DEED](#) website.

Thursday:

The Governor announced [Executive Order 40-48](#) that extends the Stay at Home Order until May 18th (see article above for details). Governor Walz also spoke about increased testing capacity and ongoing work to procure crucial PPE for frontline workers, and said the state is prepared to open 8 temporary hospital facilities in a matter of 72 hours should they be required. The Governor said his administration is evaluating the order on elective surgeries and collecting input on their website on this issue. Click [HERE](#) for the April 30th Presentation Slides.

House Division Hears Bill to Allow Flexibility for TIF and Local Revenues

The House Property Tax Division heard [HF 3876](#)-Petersburg, on Friday. The division worked from a delete-all amendment to the bill. The bill as amended would authorize temporary flexibility in the use of excess Tax Increment Financing (TIF) increment and local sales and special taxes for general fund purposes.

The bill would allow funds to be transferred to a city's general fund after a municipality approves a spending plan and holds a public hearing to discuss the uses of any transferred increment or special tax revenues. The authority would expire on December 31, 2021. Metro Cities supports this bill to assist cities as they manage significant fiscal challenges as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and provided a joint letter of support to the Division. Pat Trudgeon, City Manager of Roseville, testified in support of the bill. HF 3876 was laid over for possible inclusion in the Property and Local Tax Division Report. If your city would benefit from this legislation, please contact your local legislators to express support for the bill. A summary of the bill can be found [HERE](#). Questions? Contact Patricia Nauman at 651-215-4002, or patricia@metrocitysmn.org

House Committee Hears PERA Aid Extension Bill

The House Government Operations Committee heard [HF 4018](#)-Carlson today. The bill replaces the current June 30, 2020 expiration date for the Public Employees Retirement Association (PERA) aid to local governments, with a date of 2048, or when the PERA plan is fully funded. This bill received some consideration earlier this session, and also in the 2019 legislative session. Metro Cities supports this bill and has signed onto a joint letter of support with the League of MN Cities and other organizations. The bill passed and was re-referred to the Ways and Means Committee. Questions? Contact Patricia Nauman at 651-215-4002 or patricia@metrocitysmn.org

House and Senate Committees Pass Transportation Policy Bills

The House and Senate Transportation Committees passed respective policy omnibus bills this week. The bills include technical and policy changes.

The Senate bill, [SF 3255- Newman](#), was amended, and most provisions have already been heard as stand-alone bills in the Senate and/or House. The bill includes provisions that:

- direct a road authority to notify the owner of any work or improvements being made on the road,
- direct the MnDOT and Public Safety Commissioners to report all expenditures of federal COVID-19 funds to the Legislature. The report must include amounts and purpose for the expenditure,
- direct the Metropolitan Council Chair to report all expenses with federal COVID-19 funds to the Legislature, including amounts and purposes for expenditures.
- direct MnDOT to develop and implement a policy for project evaluation and selection, including the Local Road and Local Bridge Programs. This policy must be developed in consultation with the Federal Highway Administration, Metropolitan Council, regional development commissions, transportation stakeholders and local governments. A policy must be adopted by November 1, 2021 to identify expected improvements in the selection process by February 1, 2022.

With respect to proposed process changes, Metro Cities has expressed support for current Local Road and Local Bridge program selection processes. The bill was passed and re-referred to the Finance Committee.

The House bill [HF 976- Hornstein](#) was amended with an identical delete-everything amendment and includes provisions to the Senate bill, with one exception that excludes the provision directing MnDOT to develop a policy for project evaluation and selection.

The bill passed unanimously and was referred to the Ways and Means Committee.

Senate Capital Investment Committee Hears Transportation Proposals

The Senate Capitol Investment Committee conducted an informational hearing this week. The hearing included general information on the need to rebuild the state's economy by investing in state transportation infrastructure. The committee heard testimony from the MN Chamber of Commerce, MnDOT Commissioner Margaret Anderson Kelliher, International Union of Operating Engineers Local 49, MN Trucking Association and the MN Valley Regional Railroad Authority. Testifiers generally supported a bonding bill to make investments in transportation and highlighted the benefits these investments have on commerce, job creation, and adding efficiency to the transportation system. The Trucking Association testified that the local road system has long been underfunded and is important to the trucking industry and the movement of freight throughout the state.

Metro Cities submitted a joint letter along with the League of MN Cities, Coalition of Greater MN Cities, the Municipal Legislative Commission, and MN Small Cities Coalition to support the inclusion of transportation funding in the bonding bill and specifically for support for Local Road and Local Bridge Program funding. The letter also provided support for a local cost share account within the Local Road program as well as support for permanent funding for the Small Cities Assistance Account. All of these provisions are supported by Metro Cities. Chair Newman stated that the bonding bill could be used to benefit the system at a time when decreases are expected in dedicated revenues sources such as the gas tax. Chair Senjem told the committee that a draft Senate Capital Investment bill will be released soon.

Senate Environment Finance Committee Passes Appropriations and Policy Bill

The Senate Environment Finance Committee passed [SF 4499- Ingebrigtsen](#), an environment supplemental funding bill. The bill was referred to the Senate floor. The bill includes provisions that:

- direct DNR to provide estimates of the impact of any new restriction or policy on existing and future groundwater users and local governments before a water management plan is prepared,
- limit what information can be disseminated during the development of a groundwater management area plan. Requires assessment of economic effects of groundwater management designations,
- makes a change to the definition of ‘sustainable’ for purposes of groundwater management areas, as a use that does not result in a change in hydrologic regime of more than 20 percent relative to the August median stream flow,
- makes a clarification that the PCA may not increase the fee for wastewater & water supply system operator certification without legislative approval,
- makes changes to requirements for the PCA’s permitting efficiency report. The changes include making it semi-annual, requiring it to cover only Tier 2 permits, requiring implementation of program changes, requiring information about the percent of applications in a category and requires information about industrial and municipal permits to be separately stated,
- provides clarification that the PCA may not increase water-related permit fees without legislative approval,
- establishes a voluntary salt applicator certification program and
- exempts plans and local regulations of local government units in the Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area from the review and approval procedures that ordinarily apply and replaces those requirements and replaces them with a more streamlined review and approval process.

Emerald Ash Borer Grant Recipients Announced

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) recently announced the recipients of Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) grants. Emerald ash borer is a steadily spreading tree pest currently affecting urban tree populations in 23 counties. 25 cities received grants, including 11 cities in the metropolitan area. There were two types of grants awarded. The *Preparing for EAB in Community Forests Grants* and *EAB Community Forest Response Tree Planting Grants*. Metro Cities has identified state funding for this purpose as a legislative priority and will continue to support funding for cities to mitigate the costs of the EAB infestation. Funding for these grants came from a one-time appropriation and will require future appropriations. For more information, click [here](#).

The following metropolitan cities received preparation grants: Bayport-\$53,100.00, Brooklyn Park-\$100,000.00, Columbia Heights- \$100,000.00 and Lakeville- \$25,000.00

The following metro cities received tree planting grants: Blaine-\$28,364.00, Maplewood,- \$30,000.00, Mendota Heights-\$12,715.00, Roseville-\$30,000.00, St. Louis Park-\$30,000.00, St. Paul-\$30,000.00 and West St. Paul-\$25,000.00

Transit Ambassador Bill Passes House Committee

The House Public Safety and Corrections Committee passed [HF 3085-Tabke](#), to create a transit ambassador program. The bill was amended, and includes provisions to:

- direct the Metropolitan Council to create a program for transit fare enforcement and administrative citations,
- authorize administrative citations as an alternative to a judicial penalty for violations related to nonpayment of fares,
- create light rail transit (LRT) facility monitoring requirements and
- prohibit access to Metropolitan Council transit service for specified periods following repeat administrative citations, or gross misdemeanor and felony convictions for violations committed in the council's transit facilities.

The bill also creates two separate options to enforce fare-related violations. A cost estimate and funding sources for the bill will be available at the next hearing of this bill. The bill was passed and referred to the Ways and Means Committee.

Housing Assistance, Jobs, Broadband Bill Passes to House Floor

The House Ways and Means Committee passed a COVID-19 relief bill this week, with several sections of interest to Metro Cities. The House bill, [HF1507-Stephenson](#) as amended, includes a [small business assistance package](#) directed to a range of businesses, [housing assistance](#), and [broadband funding](#). See earlier editions of Metro Cities News for details on these proposals. Contact Charlie Vander Aarde at 651-366-7564 or charlie@metrocitiesmn.org with any questions.

Metropolitan Council Livable Communities Webinar –Monday, May 4

The Metropolitan Council will host a webinar to provide updates on the Livable Communities programs. Staff will introduce the LCA team, provide an overview for all 2020 grant programs, get feedback on how to set affordable housing goals and answer any questions cities may have about re-enrollment or the grant programs.

Monday, May 4
10am – 11:30am
[Register here](#)

The Council's Community Development Committee will also hear an update Monday on work by LCA staff on the next cycle for LCA housing goals that are required to be negotiated between cities and the Council. Metro Cities supports a process for these goals that is similar to the last negotiation cycle, that recognizes the need for additional funding resources. We will provide additional information as the goals are considered by the Metropolitan Council.

Bills of Note

[HF 4612](#), Lucero/[SF 4523](#), Howe: Bill modifies statewide voter registration system maintenance and establishes a system for provisional balloting. If enacted, bill would be applied to this year's state primary and general elections and any elections after that.

[HF 4613](#), Bierman/[SF 4414](#), Clausen: Bill prevents counties and municipalities from designating school buildings as polling places unless no other building is available.

Metro Cities News is emailed periodically to Metro Cities member mayors, councilmembers, city managers/administrators, and city staff to keep officials and staff abreast of important metro city issues.

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Metro Cities (Association of Metropolitan Municipalities)
145 University Ave W, St. Paul, MN 55103-2044
Phone 651-215-4000 · Fax 651-281-1299 · www.MetroCitiesMN.org