

Metro Cities Provides Testimony to Blue Ribbon Committee on the Metropolitan Council

On Monday, Metro Cities was invited to provide testimony to the Governor's Blue-Ribbon Committee on the Metropolitan Council. Metro Cities' testimony included background information on the association and its role in representing the interests of metropolitan cities at the Council, and the association's policy positions on regional governance as well as transit systems, governance and funding. The Citizens' League, League of Women Voters, Suburban Transit Association and county representatives also provided testimony regarding the Council's governance, its MPO function, and the role of the suburban transit providers in the region.

Monday marked the third meeting of the Blue-Ribbon Committee. The Committee is expected to conclude its work and make any recommendations on the Council's structure and governance at that time. Metro Cities is closely monitoring the work of the committee and will provide further updates.

November 19th Policy Adoption Meeting: Mark Your Calendar!

Metro Cities' policy adoption meeting will be held remotely on **Thursday, November 19th at 4:00 p.m.** at which time the association's 2021 legislative policies will be adopted by the membership. Draft policies are available for review [here](#). Policies were recommended by four policy committees and approved by the Metro Cities Board of Directors. Protocols for policy adoption were emailed to city managers and administrators last week. Additional details will be provided in advance of the meeting. Your presence is important and appreciated!

Metro Cities has invited Briana Bierschbach from the Star Tribune and Brian Bakst from Minnesota Public Radio (MPR) to join us on the 19th, to share their insights on the elections and upcoming legislative session. Please RSVP to jennifer@metrocitiesmn.org or 651-215-4000. Additional details to follow soon.

Metropolitan Council Releases 2021 Draft Budget for Public Comment

The Metropolitan Council has adopted the [public comment draft of its 2021 budget](#). Verbal and written comments may be submitted through December 9 as well as at a public hearing on December 9 at 6 pm.

The Metropolitan Council budget for operations, pass-through programs, and debt service (loan repayments) is \$1.138 billion. Metro Cities has reported on specific budget areas in previous newsletters. This draft budget includes several highlights, including a projected flat (0%) property tax levy. The 2021 budget includes \$175 million in federal revenue.

Council ridership is projected to be 32 million rides, down from pre-pandemic ridership of 82.5 million. Federal CARES Act funds replace lost transit fare revenues in the 2021 budget. The transportation budget receives \$29 million to support operations and \$74 million in federal CARES Act funds and \$1 million in passthrough for Suburban Transit Providers. This budget includes

\$302 million from MVST receipts and \$35 million in MVST to suburban transit providers. The Council will reduce transit service levels to respond to ridership demands.

The 2021 budget includes a 2% increase in the metropolitan wastewater charge. With this increase, the average metro household will pay \$29 a month in retail sewer charges. Approximately 54% of that payment is the Council's wastewater charge and 46% is charged by the local municipality. For the eighth year in a row, the one-time sewer availability charge (SAC) imposed on development remains at \$2,485 per residential equivalent unit.

Federal revenues budgeted in the Metro HRA are \$72 million. A total of \$66 million is passed through as rental assistance payments directly to landlords.

How to Comment on the Budget:

- Write to Metropolitan Council Public Information at 390 Robert St. N., St Paul, MN 55101.
- Email Metropolitan Council Public Information at public.info@metc.state.mn.us.
- Record a comment on the Public Comment Line at 651.602.1500 (TTY 651.291.0904).
- Comment at the December 9 public hearing: The Council's website at <https://metro council.org/About-Us/Who-We-Are/Budget.aspx> will contain instructions for how to comment during that meeting.

MnDOT Releases Municipal State Aid (MSA) Needs Report

MnDOT recently released the 2020 Municipal State Aid Street (MSA) Needs Report. This report is used to inform recommendations by the Municipal Screening Board in their annual construction needs recommendation to the Commissioner of Transportation. MSA funding comes from the Highway User Tax Distribution Fund (HUTDF) and revenue for this fund predominantly comes from the state gas tax and license tab fees, as directed by the Minnesota Constitution. Cities with populations over 5,000 are eligible for these funds. Half of the funds are apportioned based on an eligible city's population and half is apportioned based on a prorated share of a city's construction need. These recommendations must be submitted to the Commissioner by November 1st. MSA allocations will be released in January. To view the report, click [here](#).

Metropolitan Council Plans Purchase of Council-Owned Housing Unit

The Metropolitan Council currently owns 150 housing units across suburban Anoka, Ramsey and Hennepin counties. The Council voted October 28 to purchase a single unit in Maple Grove. This would be the Council's first home purchased since 2004.

Council-owned properties became part of the agency's real estate portfolio following the 1999 creation of the Family Affordable Housing Program. That program was created following a consent decree to demolish 770 public housing units in Minneapolis and redevelop them in non-concentrated areas of the city and suburbs. The Council used federal funds and spent \$28 million to purchase 150 units between 2001 and 2004. In order to purchase a home, state statute requires the Council to receive consent from the city in which the property is located. In this case, the Maple Grove city council plans to review the purchase in early November.

The Council is purchasing the home through existing funds. It will transfer \$200,000 of the \$500,000 in the Authorized Capital Program to purchase this property. Councilmembers also instructed staff to develop a policy on future acquisition and sales of Council-owned homes, to

prepare for future opportunities. Contact Charlie Vander Aarde at 651-366-7564 or charlie@metrocitiesmn.org with any questions.

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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