



Metro Cities 2021 Legislative Policies Adopted by Membership

Metro Cities membership approved the 2021 Legislative Policies at the Policy Adoption Meeting at a November 19 virtual meeting that featured Briana Bierschbach, Star Tribune and Brian Bakst, Minnesota Public Radio as guest speakers. Legislative policies are available on the Metro Cities website [here](#). Thank you to policy chairs Jason Gadd, Patrick Trudgeon, Gary Hansen, and Bryan Hartman, and all committee members for your hard work this year!

New Executive Order Further Restricts Gatherings

Governor Tim Walz this week announced further restrictions on allowable gatherings throughout Minnesota. The restrictions in [Executive Order 20-99](#) include: a pause on organized sports, no in-person dining at bars and restaurants, gatherings limited to immediate family, no access to entertainment venues, no receptions and private parties, and no access to gyms and fitness studios. Those slides are [available here](#).

The administration offered a webinar on November 19, explaining the public health data that led to the decision, as well as explaining what places of public assembly are impacted by the four-week order. Retail shops, grocery, outdoor recreation, and churches will maintain existing limited capacities and the governor insisted Minnesotans only make necessary trips, to reduce exposure and spreading opportunities.

The state will make \$10 million available for businesses impacted by the closures. Applications for the previous Business Assistance Program, awarded by a lottery system, will be eligible for the new round of funding assistance.

The order clarifies that “the limits on gatherings in this Executive Order do not apply to legislative and other governmental meetings. Remote meetings are strongly encouraged whenever possible as permitted by state or local authority.”

Restrictions begin at 11:59 pm on November 20 and run through 11:59 pm on December 18. More information can be found on the state’s COVID page at <https://staysafe.mn.gov/> and [Frequently Asked Questions](#) page.

TAB Considers Regional Solicitation Funding Scenarios

With a final decision expected next month, the Transportation Advisory Board (TAB) discussed Regional Solicitation funding scenarios at their monthly meeting this week. The Regional Solicitation is the process by which federal transportation funding for the regional are allocated. Members discussed four scenarios. Several members expressed support for attempting to ensure each county received a project through the regular solicitation or over-programming process. Over programming is the selecting of projects in advance of a potential receipt of

additional funds from the federal government to the region. The TAB voted to move forward with funding scenario 1-B, as it is identified in the business item, when determining over programming. This scenario would use a historical funding process and ensure that Scott County would have a project included in this funding.

The TAB was also presented with a historical geographic balance of project selection, including how different funding scenarios would be distributed by county. To view the staff presentation to the TAB, click [here](#). To view the business item, which includes details in the funding scenarios that were discussed, click [here](#).

The TAB is expected to approve all but a BRT project at their December 16th meeting, with the BRT project being selected in April. The total amount allocated will be approximately \$193 million, with an additional overprogrammed allocation of approximately \$20 million.

The TAB decided to delay action until after the current Regional Solicitation to determine the allocation of approximately \$4.5 million that has been turned back from a 2014 transit project allocation for the Gold Line.

TPP Adopted by the Met Council

The Metropolitan Council approved an update to the Transportation Policy Plan (TPP). The TPP plays a central role in the regional transportation planning process and is updated every four years. The TPP is being updated to better conform with federal planning deadlines. The draft includes updates to incorporate the results of planning and corridor studies, changes to major projects, updated data and the inclusion of studies to measure the impacts of COVID-19 on the transportation system.

To view the business item, click [here](#). To view the staff presentation, click [here](#). To view the full TPP, click [here](#).

TAB/TAC Solicitation

Metro Cities is seeking candidates for the Transportation Advisory Board (TAB) for two municipal seats as well as one seat on the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) for seats that will become open in January. The TAB qualifies the region for federal transportation funds and is a participant in the 3C transportation processes that affect transportation planning and funding in the metro region. Municipal appointees to the TAB must be elected officials, and Metro Cities' guidelines for appointment place a high priority on appointment balance with respect to geography and city size. There are no term limits for TAB seats, but members are reappointed every two years and must meet attendance requirements to qualify for reappointment as well as city officials with a strong background and interest in transportation issues. Guidelines also give preference to those who serve or agree to serve on Metro Cities Transportation Policy Committee.

Metro Cities is also seeking interested applicants for an opening on the Metropolitan Council's Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) that advises the TAB (Transportation Advisory Board). Appointees must be department head level staff with an engineering, planning or public works background. Metro Cities' guidelines place a high priority on making the TAC balanced with respect to city size and geography. The Board also gives preference to those who agree to serve on Metro Cities Transportation Policy Committee. The Board seeks candidates who can commit to attending meetings.

The deadline for applications is Friday, December 11, 2020. Interested candidates should submit (1) a completed [questionnaire](#), (2) a letter of interest and (3) resume to Jennifer Dorn at jennifer@metrocitiesmn.org or by mail to Metro Cities at 145 University Avenue W, St. Paul, MN 55103.

Metropolitan Council Amends 2020 Distribution Plan for Low-Income Housing

The Metropolitan Council [redirected \\$1 million](#) in funds previously directed to address homelessness to instead be added to the Local Housing Incentives Account. The funds will now be awarded through the Council's portion of the awards issued from this summer's Consolidated RFP.

The Council contributed the \$1 million to the state's Minnesota Winter Homeless Initiative in the Council's 2020 budget. Council staff explained funding decisions related to COVID-19 and private sector funds led to uncertainty in being able to expend the funds. The transfer to LHIA ensures similar goals of addressing homelessness will be met and the funds would be awarded in calendar year 2020. Contact Charlie Vander Aarde at charlie@metrocitiesmn.org with any questions.

Housing Assistance Funds Remain Available, Deadline Expected Soon

Minnesotans who are experiencing trouble paying their housing bills due to the COVID-19 pandemic are encouraged to access the state's housing assistance funds, authorized earlier this summer. Rent and mortgage assistance are available, as well as lot rent, homeowner association dues and other eligible uses.

The first step to access the funds is for residents to apply. While no deadline for the housing assistance program has been announced, the state has an approaching deadline to expend the funds. Residents are encouraged to apply soon.

- CALL 211 or toll free at 1.800.543.7709 or 651.291.0211 (from cell phones)
- ONLINE at www.211unitedway.org
- TEXT "MNRENT" or "MNHOME" to 898-211

If someone is eligible for State Funds, their application will be directed to the local agency they will be working with. Contact Charlie Vander Aarde with any questions, at charlie@metrocitiesmn.org.

MHFA Funding Announcements Expected in December

Minnesota Housing Commissioner Jennifer Ho, presenting at a pre-session event for housing advocates this week, announced the agency is expecting to announce awards for housing funds in December. The legislature appropriated \$116 million for housing in October's bonding bill - \$16 million in general obligation bonds for publicly owned housing and \$100 million in housing infrastructure bonds for privately owned housing. While the agency traditionally makes the announcement in October or November, the later awarding of state funds in the October special session has delayed the 2020 announcement of funds awarded through the 2020 Consolidated RFP.

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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