



Save the Date! Metro Cities Legislative Session Preview

Join us for a 2021 legislative preview on **Thursday, January 7, 2021 from 4:00 – 5:00 pm**. The preview will include highlights of the 2020 elections, state budget setting process, key anticipated issues to watch for in 2021, tips for advocating at the Capitol, and Metro Cities' 2021 session priorities. Join Metro Cities' Government Affairs consultants Kris Amundson and Lori Grivna of Amundson Strategies and Metro Cities' government relations team. The event will be held via Zoom. More details coming soon! Please RSVP to Jennifer Dorn at jennifer@metrocitiesmn.org

House, Senate Review COVID-Relief Proposals in Advance of December Special Session

This week, House and Senate committees reviewed proposals for COVID relief to individuals, families and businesses affected by COVID-19 and state restrictions in place due to the pandemic.

The House Ways and Means Committee reviewed a package of proposed legislation for businesses, unemployment insurance (UI) recipients, and families facing housing and child-care and food burdens due to the pandemic.

The House's [business assistance grants proposal](#) would direct state support to businesses. \$100 million would be distributed as direct payments to restaurants, bars, cafeterias, coffee shops, breweries, wineries, distilleries, bowling alleys, gyms and exercise studios, with amounts based on the number of employees. Bill author Rep. Tim Mahoney estimated over 5,000 businesses statewide would be eligible for this part of the program. \$14 million is for payments to indoor movie theaters and large convention centers, and \$102.5 million would go to counties to distribute to eligible businesses and nonprofits. Each county would receive \$17.30 per capita; smaller counties in greater Minnesota would receive a minimum of \$200,000.

Rep. Jim Davnie is authoring a [civil unrest relief fund](#) for affected areas and the committee also discussed a 13-week extension to UI recipients. Rep. Mohamud Noor presented a \$10 million [food relief grant proposal](#) to provide economic support to certain Minnesota owned and operated restaurants, catering companies, and food establishments as well as hunger relief. Rep. Noor explained proposed [supplemental payment](#) for the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) that would provide up to \$500 in a one-time payment.

A [\\$50 million proposal](#) for housing assistance is being proposed by Rep. Alice Hausman. Her legislation would continue the goals of the COVID Housing Assistance Program (CHAP) enacted this summer and that accepted applications through December 7 and her proposal would allow property tax bills to be paid with funds.

The Senate Jobs Committee also met December 10, and discussed a similar [business and nonprofit relief program](#). It contains the same funding programs and funding amounts as the House proposal with policy language differences. Revenue Commissioner Robert Doty explained the department, once authorized, could begin making payments within several weeks.

Contact Charlie Vander Aarde at 651-215-4001 or charlie@metrocitiesmn.org with any questions.

Metropolitan Council Passes 2021 Budget

The Metropolitan Council passed its 2021 budget on December 9. The Council held a public hearing that evening before adopting the budget. More details on the [2021 budget](#) can be found in the [October 30 Metro Cities News](#).

Public Comment Period for TMA Certification Open

The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), including the Federal Transit Administration and the Federal Highway Administration, is asking for your feedback on the Metropolitan Council's transportation planning process as part of its Transportation Management Area (TMA) certification review. The public and those involved in the transportation planning process can provide input through Jan. 22, 2021.

About the certification

Every four years, the Secretary of the DOT must certify that each metropolitan planning organization (MPO) serving as a TMA is carrying out the metropolitan planning process in adherence with federal statutes and regulations. A TMA is a designation by the DOT as an urbanized area with a population over 200,000.

The Federal Transit and Federal Highway administrations conduct a review of the metropolitan planning process for each TMA and jointly issue this certification on behalf of the DOT Secretary, in accordance with 49 U.S.C. 5303(k).

Public participation

As part of the process, the certifying agencies would like the public and stakeholder communities to share views on how the Metropolitan Council is meeting the transportation planning needs of the region.

[Learn more about the TMA Certification and how to comment on the Met Council web site.](#)

How to comment

The certifying agencies are accepting online survey responses, as well as written or recorded comments.

- [Complete the online survey](#)
- Send an email to public.info@metc.state.mn.us
- Call and leave a message on the public comment line 651-602-1500 or TTY: 651-291-0904

Next steps

The U.S. DOT will review all the public comments and consider them for incorporation into the final document. Your input could have impacts on the future transportation planning direction of the Met Council. The report is scheduled to be completed in spring 2021.

Local Road Improvement Program Grant Application Now Open

MnDOT is accepting grant applications for funds from the Local Road Improvement Program (LRIP). All cities are eligible. The 2020 Bonding bill included \$75 million for the LRIP for grants for local road projects. Applications are due by March 3, and awards will be announced in May. The maximum grant award per local unit of government is \$1.25 million. Cities are encouraged to apply.

The MnDOT Office of State Aid has provided the following guidelines for those interested in applying for funds:

- Projects that have received legislatively selected appropriations (“earmarks”) or previous LRIP grants are not eligible for funding under this solicitation.
- Projects that will be awarded or are under construction before the anticipated LRIP award notifications in May 2021 are not eligible for funding under this solicitation.
- Projects should be non-controversial and should be targeting construction in 2021, 2022, or 2023.
- County projects will be evaluated against other county projects, state aid city projects against state aid city projects, and small city/township projects against small city/township projects. Projects from all four local road authorities will be funded.
- The expected useful life of improvements must be a minimum of 10 years. Maintenance type activities such as filling potholes, blading gravel roads, and stand-alone ditch repairs are not eligible for LRIP grants.
- Items that are eligible for LRIP funds include reasonable elements associated with roadway construction, including basic landscaping and turf establishment. Landscaping planters, benches, bike racks, decorative fences, ornamental lighting, and other aesthetic treatments above the standard are generally not eligible. Other items that are not eligible include engineering; construction administration and inspection; right of way acquisition; and water main, sanitary sewer, or private utility work.
- This LRIP solicitation is funded with general obligation bonds, and thus funds cannot be used for improvements on the trunk highway system, including those costs that might be required from a local agency on a trunk highway project as per MnDOT’s Cost Participation Policy.
- Projects will be selected by MnDOT in consultation with the LRIP Advisory Committee, which is comprised of local government representatives.

Questions should be directed to MnDOT State Aid Programs Engineer Marc Brieese at marc.brieese@state.mn.us.

To view the 2020 LRIP Solicitation Guide, click [here](#). For more information on the LRIP, click [here](#).

MnDOT Releases HUTDF/MSA Fund Update

MnDOT recently released the 2020 November Transportation Funds Update. This report includes an update to the financial outlook of the Highway User Tax Distribution (HUTD) Fund, which includes funding for the Municipal State Aid System (MSAS). HUTDF revenues are projected to be higher in the End of Session 2020 forecast that was released in May but is still 4.8 percent lower than the 2020 February forecasts from prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to the impact of the pandemic on 2020 revenues, cities receiving MSAS funds will see an adjustment in 2021 of a -4 percent to -5 percent reduction. Combined with estimated available revenues, the allocations MSAS cities will receive will be about -9 percent less than distributions in 2020.

The HUTDF receives constitutionally dedicated sources of funding that include gas tax revenues, license tab fees, and Motor Vehicle Sales Tax (MVST). The HUTDF also receives statutorily dedicated funds from vehicle lease taxes, auto parts sales tax, and rental sales tax. Cities with a population of 5,000 or more are eligible to receive MSAS funds and amounts are based on population and infrastructure needs.

To view the 2020 November Transportation Funds Update, click [here](#).

2021 Virtual Brownfield Basics Course

City officials who are interested in learning more about redevelopment on brownfields or previously developed land are able to sign up for a 2021 course on brownfield basics.

Minnesota Brownfields has adapted its Brownfield Basics program to a virtual event for 2021. This program aims to introduce brownfields newcomers to the fundamentals of the field, with sessions taught by real estate professionals, environmental consultants, legal experts, development professionals, and more. In three 90-minute sessions, participants will have an opportunity to hear presentations from these experts and discuss the material in small groups.

The sessions of the Brownfield Basics course will focus on Foundation (Jan 12th), Friends (Jan 26th), and Finance (Feb 9th) from 4-6 pm. The event is free of charge and the registration link can be [found here](#).

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.

If you'd like to sign up to receive Metro Cities News, please email newsletter@metrocitiesmn.org and provide the following: Name, Title, Employer and Email address. Thank you!

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