

COVID-19 Restrictions Update

In a press conference on Thursday, Governor Walz announced a scheduled roll-back of COVID-19 restrictions. Starting May 7, capacity and distancing requirements on outdoor events will be lifted and masks will not be required for outdoor venues for less than 500 people. Indoor events will have an increased occupancy limits, such as restaurants increasing table sizes to 10. The mandatory closing time for restaurants and bars will also be lifted. On May 28, state COVID-19 restrictions will end, including capacity limits and distancing requirements for indoor or outdoor events. The mask mandate will either end when 70% of Minnesotans 16+ are vaccinated or by July 1. Local jurisdiction and entities will be able to set their own policies on mask requirements. [Emergency Executive Order 21-21](#).

Governor Walz continued to encourage Minnesotans to get vaccinated. For information on finding an appointment visit <https://vaccineconnector.mn.gov/en-US/>.

Legislative Session Updates

With a little over a week remaining in the 2021 session, omnibus bill conference committees are meeting regularly and meetings among the Governor and Senate and House legislative leaders to negotiate budget targets began this week. The Legislature is required to set a budget for the next biennium by June 30, 2021. Key issues certain to figure in end of session negotiations include tax increase proposals, education spending, public safety and police reforms and the Governor's emergency powers. The Legislature must adjourn on Monday May 17.

Metro Cities is monitoring and providing written and verbal testimony on provisions in several omnibus bills. See bill updates below. The legislature has set up a webpage to track conference committee work. The [2021 Conference Committee Activity](#) page lists committee documents and agendas by date.

Taxes

The Taxes Conference Committee's Wednesday meeting included a robust policy discussion on local option sales taxes and tax increment financing provisions. Senate and House chairs shared their approaches to considering local sales tax bills, including regional benefits of projects and whether the proposed tax is sufficient to pay for bonds. Members also discussed concerns about whether local sales taxes exacerbate disparities in local tax bases, and whether property taxes are a more appropriate funding source. No action was taken on provisions in the bills. Please contact Patricia Nauman at patricia@metrocitiesmn.org with any questions.

Conferees: Representatives Marquart, Youakim, Her, Lislegard, Davids.
Senators Nelson, Weber, Miller, Rest, Bakk.

Housing (HF 1077)

Metro Cities provided testimony at the first hearing of the Housing conference committee Monday, with remarks focused on opposition to preemption provisions in the Senate language and support for increases in state funds in the House bill that would support a range of housing needs, including rental and homeownership. No additional meetings were held this week. Thank you to

cities that provided written comments to oppose the preemption provisions. If you provide comments, please copy charlie@metrocitiesmn.org.

Conferees: Representatives Hausman, Howard, Agbaje, Reyer, and Theis; and Senators Draheim, Duckworth, Dahms, Pratt, and Dziedzic.

Jobs, Workforce and Business Development (SF 1098)

The Jobs conference committee heard testimony at Monday's and Tuesday's meetings. Metro Cities testified in support of an appropriation for the redevelopment grant program, funding for the Minnesota Investment Fund and Job Creation Fund as well as business relief and workforce development. The next conference committee meeting is scheduled for May 8.

Conferees: Senators Pratt, Draheim, Housley, Rarick, and Eken; and Representatives Noor, Ecklund, L. Olson, Berg, and Hamilton.

Transportation (HF 1684)

The Conference Committee for HF 1684 met three days this week. Metro Cities provided testimony in support of several provisions included in one or both bills.

Most provisions in this [document](#) that are same or similar, were adopted on Monday. Some provisions of note include the regulation of electronic-assisted bicycles, fee adjustments for deputy registrars, and changes in the way that MnDOT regulates drones. The committee spent Tuesday's meeting working off of [this document](#). One item of note from Tuesday's work was the adoption of revised criteria for MnDOT's local bridge program. Members continued Wednesday using [this list of provisions](#). Among adopted provisions were changes to the Corridors of Commerce program. Specifically, the committee agreed that MnDOT should consider project readiness and that all criteria be given equal weight (except with regard to regional balance).

Conferees: Representatives Hornstein, Koegel, Frederick, Elkins, and Petersburg; and Senators Newman, Jasinski, Howe, Osmek, and Bigham.

Environment (SF 959)

Much of the conversation in the Conference Committee for SF 959 has revolved around the differences between the House and Senate positions on the authority of the MN Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) to adopt more stringent vehicle emissions standards. The Senate offered [this offer](#) on May 6, and the House responded with their [own offer](#). Conferees: Senators Ingebrigtsen, Ruud, Eichorn, Tomassoni, and Westrom; and Representatives Hansen, R., Wazlawik, Morrison, Fischer, and Heintzeman.

Public Safety (SF 970)

The Conference Committee for SF 970 has met every day this week. The committee has heard from the Department of Human Rights, Department of Corrections, and the Department of Public Safety. Police reform and accountability has dominated the committee's discussions and Thursday's hearing focused entirely on the House proposal in this area. Most of the proposed reforms can be found in [Article 10](#) of the House language. Thursday's hearing included several testifiers including the Chair of the POST Board and several community groups. House conferees have submitted two offers to the Senate. The first is a list of civil law provisions based on [same or similar language](#) found in both versions of the SF 970. The [second offer](#) contains the police reforms discussed on Thursday. Metro Cities provided testimony in support of proposed grants to local law enforcement agencies for training.

Conferees: Senators Limmer, Mathews, Ingebrigtsen, Johnson, and Latz; Representatives Mariani, Becker-Finn, Moller, Frazier, and Miller.

State Government, Veterans and Military Affairs (HF 1952)

Metro Cities provided testimony in support of several provisions in either or both of the State Government bills including grants to cities for election administration and repealing the salary cap for municipal employees. The association also raised concerns over the proposed limitations on

using public funds for ballot questions and the prohibition of ranked-choice voting. The committee has been working through same and similar language and plans to meet next on Saturday, May 8. Conferees: Representatives Nelson, M., Masin, Xiong, T., Greenman, and Nash; and Senators Kiffmeyer, Lang, Howe, Koran, and Carlson.

Minnesota Housing Seeks Input on 2022-23 Affordable Housing Plan

Minnesota Housing is seeking input that will be used to develop its 2022-2023 Affordable Housing Plan in the coming months. [Take the survey here.](#)

The Affordable Housing Plan is Minnesota Housing's biennial business plan that supports the vision and priorities outlined in the agency's [Strategic Plan](#). The Affordable Housing Plan includes information on the program initiatives Minnesota Housing plans to carry out over the next two years. It also provides estimates of the financial resources it expects to make available for each of its activities.

Once a draft is developed, Minnesota Housing will release it for public comment. For reference, here is a link to the current [2020-2021 Affordable Housing Plan](#).

Metro Cities Accepting Applications for TAC Opening

Metro Cities is seeking candidates for an opening on the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) that advises the regional Transportation Advisory Board (TAB). 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. Appointees must be department head level staff with an engineering, planning or public works background. Metro Cities' guidelines place 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 and seeks candidates who can commit to attending meetings.

The deadline is Friday, May 14, 2021. Interested candidates should submit a letter of interest and resume to Jennifer Dorn at jennifer@metrocitiesmn.org.

Federal Infrastructure Plans: Transportation Alliance Webinar

On Thursday morning the Transportation Alliance hosted a webinar exploring federal infrastructure proposals and their potential impact on Minnesota. The two guest speakers were Juong Lee, Director of Policy and Government Relations at the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) and Serge Phillips, Federal Relations Manager at the Minnesota Department of Transportation. Lee outlined key provisions in the Biden Administration's American Jobs Plan as well as the Senate Republican Infrastructure Plan. Phillips explained how the competing plans could impact the state and what MnDOT is doing in anticipation of additional transportation funding from the federal government. Both speakers emphasized the importance of getting funds to local governments, but Lee cautioned that smaller jurisdictions may not have the necessary capacity to accept such a large amount of federal dollars. Check the [Transportation Alliance](#) website in the coming days for a recording of the webinar.

2021 Metro Cities Policy Committees

Metro Cities is preparing for 2021 policy committees and your participation is encouraged! Meetings will be conducted remotely and will be held in July, August, and September. Committees will recommend legislative policies for 2022 and are open for participation by member city elected officials and staff. Committees and dates are on our [website](#).

Additional information, including remote meeting access, will be posted as it becomes available. Please be sure to sign up for the committee(s) you wish to attend. This will help us keep our rosters current and accurate. We look forward to seeing you this summer!

Metro Area Mayors Participate in Affordable Housing Press Conference

On Tuesday, Senator Amy Klobuchar visited Bloomington to discuss a federal proposal to help provide affordable and accessible housing with local officials. Senator Klobuchar promoted a Housing Supply and Affordability Act that would create a \$300 million grant program to advance local housing policy, reduce barriers to housing and avoid displacement. The program would provide technical assistance to increase housing supply, improve affordability, and reduce barriers to new developments. Bloomington Mayor Tim Busse, St. Paul Mayor Melvin Carter, and Richfield Mayor Maria Regan-Gonzalez highlighted their cities' efforts to address affordable and accessible housing. Former Mayor Chris Coleman also supported the bill on behalf of Habitat for Humanity.

Bills of Note

[HF 2594 - Klevorn](#): Bill provides election districting principles and requires redistricting reports.

[SF 2484 - Dziejczak](#) / [HF 2580 - Freiberg](#) : Bill authorizes cities and counties to impose residency requirements for peace officers.

[SF 2488 - Latz](#): Bill provides policy and appropriations for Sentencing Guidelines Commission, public safety, Peace Officers Standards and Training Board, Private Detective Board, corrections, and ombudsperson for corrections.

[SF 2490 - Pratt](#) / [HF 1500 - Albright](#) : Bill would modify the governance of the Metropolitan Council, eliminate the Transportation Advisory Board, and create a technical advisory committee.

[SF 2497 - Housley](#) / [HF 1597 - Daudt](#): Bill would authorize food retailers to sell wine and beer.

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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