

Star Tribune Counterpoint on Local Housing Issues

Metro Cities, along with the League of MN Cities, Coalition of Greater Minnesota Cities, Association of Small Cities, and the Municipal Legislative Commission, signed a commentary submission to the Star Tribune that was published earlier this week. The counterpoint addresses recent articles regarding local zoning authority and affordable housing, and proposed legislation that would mandate zoning at the state rather than local level. The commentary highlights the importance of adequate investment and incentives to address housing needs, and the need to allow, rather than constrain, local innovation and flexibility in addressing housing needs in a community. The counterpoint can be accessed [HERE](#).

Second Round of Policy Committee Meetings

This week, Metro Cities' four legislative policy committees met for the second of three scheduled meetings. Committees heard presentations from Metro Transit, suburban transit providers, National League of Cities, the State's COVID-19 Response Office under MMB, the Department of Revenue, and several city officials on a range of topics of pertinence to the work of the committees.

The Municipal Revenues Committee completed the adoption of policies under its jurisdiction and will not convene for a third meeting. The remaining committees will meet again in September. Stay tuned for additional information. Questions on how to participate? Contact Jennifer Dorn at Jennifer@metrocitiesmn.org

Metropolitan Council Passes Preliminary Budget

The Metropolitan Council passed its preliminary 2022 operating budget and 2022 tax levy this week. A final budget and levy will be passed in December.

The budget includes a 2% net property tax increase, an increase of 19.6% in federal revenues, a 4% increase in municipal wastewater charges, a 38% increase in MVST transfers in and a 3% percent increase in SAC transfers in (the SAC rate will remain flat in 2022). The Livable Communities program is projected to have a 2% increase. The budget spreadsheets can be found at the end of [this packet](#).

Transit ridership on express and local bus, light rail, and dial-a-ride is projected at 55% of pre-pandemic levels. Metro Mobility ridership is forecasted to return to pre-pandemic levels. Transit fare revenues are projected at \$63 million, compared to \$111 million in 2020 and \$45 million in 2021. A [Council budget document](#) reports how the Met Council received three federal relief funding plans for transportation in years 2020 and 2021, totaling \$725.8 million; funds used to support transit operations and balance its budget. 50 additional community service officers will be added to transit routes, to deter crime and code-of-conduct violations.

Metro Transit Updates

Brian Funk, the acting Chief Operating Officer of Metro Transit, provided an update on transit operations to the Metropolitan Council Transportation Committee. He described Metro Transit's State Fair service that includes three park and ride locations, and a mobile vaccination bus. Metro Transit is focusing on maintaining regular routes and therefore will be offering less express service to the fairgrounds than in years past.

Metro Transit is working to address a bus operator shortage and Mr. Funk listed workforce development initiatives currently underway for current and new employees. He described light rail and bus upgrades such as seat replacement, camera upgrades and paint, along with future vehicle procurement plans. Click [HERE](#) to view slides used in the update.

At the same meeting staff provided a Ridership Report. The report shows a 31% YTD reduction in service comparing 2021 to 2020. Most of this difference can be explained by relatively full ridership in January and February of 2020 before the pandemic hit Minnesota. The data does show that ridership in April, May, and June of 2021 are above the levels they fell to in 2020. The report breaks down ridership by transit mode and shows the reduction in commuter and express rides moving into 2021. More detailed data comparing Quarter 2 numbers between 2020 and 2021 show that there has been growth and all modes listed saw at least a 26% increase in Q2 of 2021 when compared to the previous year.

Despite the slow and steady growth there remain several factors that could impact the ridership in the near-term future. The federal mask mandate on transit remains in effective until January 2022. There is uncertainty around the delta variant and other novel variants of the COVID-19 virus. The Metro Cities Transportation and General Government Policy Committee heard from Metro Transit General Manager Wes Kooistra at their second meeting this week and in his remarks he also spoke to the dynamic nature of the pandemic's impact on transit and the efforts to combat those impacts. Click [HERE](#) to view the ridership presentation.

Contact Mike Lund at michael@metrocitiesmn.org or 651-215-4003 with any questions.

Metropolitan Council Kicks Off Police Work Group

On Friday morning the Metropolitan Council Metro Transit Police Work Group convened for the first time. The group will meet twice a month for six months and is charged with digesting the findings from the Citizen League report on transit safety, developing recommendations to increase safety and security on the transit system, and working to prioritize the discussion of safety at future Committee of the Whole meetings. Click [HERE](#) to view the initial findings from the Citizens League engagement work on safety. The work group's final recommendations are due to be brought to the full Council by February 28, 2022.

At their first meeting, work group members introduced themselves and shared their priorities for the business of the group going forward. The membership is a mix of Metropolitan Council members, Metropolitan Council staff, and Metro Transit Police Department representatives. Metro Transit PD provided the group background information on the department and its various patrol teams. This presentation included a link to the department policies and an explanation of how transit police work with other law enforcement agencies to investigate crimes and charge individuals.

The next meeting date for the Work Group is Friday, September 10 at 9:00am. Click [HERE](#) for Metro Transit Police Work Group homepage on the Metropolitan Council website. Contact Mike Lund at michael@metrocitiesmn.org or 651-215-4003 with any questions.

2022 Environmental Services Capital Program

Staff presented the 2022 Capital Program to the Metropolitan Council Environment Committee on Tuesday. The 6-year program includes the current Authorized Capital Program (ACP) as well as adjustments to the ACP based on changes to current projects, the addition of new projects, and the subtraction of closed projects. The 2022 Capital Program also includes increases to the Capital Improvement Program (CIP). After all additions and adjustments, the total proposed Capital Program is \$1,693,942,525. The presentation covered wastewater system planning and also listed a number of treatment plant and interceptor projects. Click [HERE](#) for the 2022 Capital Program slides and [HERE](#) for a summary document that lists projects and funding amounts.

Contact Mike Lund at michael@metrocitiesmn.org or 651-215-4003 with any questions.

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