

Latest Adult-Use Cannabis Survey Is Live

The Office of Cannabis Management (OCM) has released its third public input survey as part of its rulemaking engagement as it begins drafting rules for Minnesota's adult-use cannabis industry. The latest survey covers retail business operations; retail sanitary standards (facilities and handling); and the expedited complaint process for local governments. The deadline to provide input on these topics is **December 28, 2023**. Click [HERE](#) to access the survey.

Future surveys are planned for topics such as packaging and labeling, licensing, social equity considerations, edible products standards and more. Click [HERE](#) to view the OCM's Rulemaking Overview page where you can see more details on upcoming surveys and sign up for rulemaking email alerts.

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

Metro Transit Presents Work on Safety

Metro Transit staff provided an update on their various public safety initiatives to the MN House Transportation Committee on Tuesday. The presentation provided some basic information on the Metro Transit Police Department (MTPD) which currently includes 109 full-time officers and 12 community service officers. The presentation also includes crime data showing trends for calls for service, crime mapping across the service area, and information on specific categories of crimes. Click [HERE](#) to view the presentation slides to learn more about this crime data. Staff also presented on how Metro Transit is utilizing private security to supplement MTPD's work throughout the system.

The 2023 omnibus transportation bill (Chapter 68) included several transit security-related provisions and the agency is currently implementing their [Safety & Security Action Plan](#). One of the new initiatives included in Chapter 68 is the Transit Service Intervention Project (TSIP). TSIP involves Metro Transit contracting with social services and outreach organizations, involves the agency's Homeless Action Team leadership, and law enforcement. The goal is to provide enhanced social services outreach and engagement for users of the transit system. There is a coordination group which includes the cities of Minneapolis, St. Paul, and Bloomington, that meets bi-monthly to discuss TSIP. The presentation slides include data on TSIP measuring the number of engagements/referrals provided through the project.

The Transit Rider Investment Program (TRIP) establishes an administrative citation process for fare non-compliance (a long-standing legislative goal of the Metropolitan Council). As of December 4, 2023, CSOs at MTPD began issuing these citations, but in 2024 that responsibility will be handed to a designated group of TRIP employees.

Other work highlighted at Tuesday's hearing includes new cleaning and repair standards for Metro Transit facilities and vehicles as well as a newly adopted Transit Rider Code of Conduct. Metro Transit staff spoke about ideas for paid fare zones and showed legislators how their camera monitoring systems operate. Finally, staff spoke about ongoing efforts to engage the public to continue to gather feedback on transit safety as these various initiatives, programs, and projects continue to be implemented.

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Local Taxes Advisory Task Force Update

The Local Taxes Advisory Task Force met this week and approved criteria for evaluating regional projects:

- Regional Public Library System. Must serve a city wide/regional population, usage by the public, multi-county system that provides services to all.
- Aquatic Center that serves a city wide/regional population, geographic measure requirement, provides economic development benefit to community and region.
- Sports complex that provides sports opportunities for residents and draws individuals from other areas, provides economic development benefit to community and opportunities for the region.
- Convention Center provides revenue opportunity for region through direct and indirect costs, provide economic development benefit to community and opportunities for the region.
- Airport that provides revenue opportunity for the region through direct and indirect costs, provides economic benefit and opportunities for region.
- Trails of regional significance (MN 85.536), provides opportunities for recreation for local and regional populations, demonstration of regional significance through state grant funding, natural resource-based setting, provides outdoor recreation, cultural characteristics, where feasible connect to planned regional parks or trails, land or water provides balanced system.
- Regional Parks as defined by 2007 Report to the Legislature.
- Community Center that serves a city wide/regional population.

Members discussed state mandated public safety facilities that protect the region and provide a public good that benefits areas beyond the jurisdictional boundaries, and tabled this item for future discussion on whether it meets the definition of a regional project. Members agreed to not include watersheds, ambulance/EMS services, and hospitals and clinics, as meeting the definition of a regional project.

Members also recommended:

- Cities and counties each have a maximum sales tax of 1 percent, in increments of .25 percent.
- Entity support for equalization evaluation.
- State Auditor will preapprove and audit local taxes.
- MN Dept of Revenue's Local Government Services Unit will administer.

The next meeting is on December 20 and will include public testimony. The final report is due by January 3 to DOR who will submit by January 15.

Governance Task Force Update

The Metropolitan Governance Task Force, created by the 2023 Legislature, met on Wednesday. The task force first heard from speakers on the topic of home-rule charters. Nestor Davidson, a professor at Fordham School of Law, provided the task force with examples of home-rule governments and local charters. Some members were interested in the process for developing and ratifying home-rule charters and others asked about pros and cons to adopting a charter versus achieving similar outcomes in state statutes.

Next, Mike McKeever spoke about his experience both as the former Executive Director of the Sacramento Council of Governments and as a planning consultant in Portland. McKeever's comments were focused on how local governments were involved in the creation of a [charter](#) in Portland. In Portland, an elected council works with an advisory board made up of local governments from around their region. Most of the conversation was related to how those two bodies collaborate, what friction or power dynamics exist between the two (or between the various local governments involved).

Robert Liberty, a former Portland Metro Councilor, made his case for an elected council with a home-rule charter and argued races were not overly partisan because the political makeup of the Portland region is relatively homogenous. Again, task force members were interested in the role of local governments and the question of constituency for our Metropolitan Council.

Finally, the task force continued to discuss what each member sees as the primary problem they should focus on solving regarding the Metropolitan Council's governance. Some suggested the primary issue was a lack of trust and accountability. Others said that regional bureaucrats get in the way of local governments. Several argued that there is no coherent vision. Some members proposed the need for additional engagement and transparency, but that there are not structural problems to address with a major overhaul of the current governance structure.

The task force is also hosting several public engagement listening sessions throughout the region as a part of their work. The first listening session was on December 8 in St. Paul. This week, there was another listening session held in Lake Elmo. Other sessions are scheduled to take place next month in Scott County and at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis. Click [HERE](#) to find all the task force meeting agendas and presentation materials.

Environment Committee Discusses 2050 Water Supply Plan

Metropolitan Council staff provided the Environment Committee with an update on the Water Policy Plan (WPP) work being done as part of the larger 2050 Regional Development Guide effort at the Council. The plan, which used to be called the Water Resource Policy Plan, focuses on sustainable water resources in the region, provides a framework for integrative water planning, and contains water policies, strategies, and actions for the Council as well as local governments. One significant change for the 2050 WPP is that it will include the Metro Area Water Supply Plan.

The presentation from this week, shared with committee members a proposed table of contents for the WPP. The presentation also described six Proposed water policy plan objectives. These proposed objectives include:

- **Sustainable Waters:** Ensuring clean, abundant waters for current and future regional needs.

- **Climate:** Create climate-resilient water sources, ecosystems, and water infrastructure through mitigation, innovative design, and adaptive planning.
- **Infrastructure:** Maximize water infrastructure investments and identify opportunities that result in benefits at multiple scales.
- **Funding:** Sustainably fund water protection and planning efforts.
- **Health:** Protect public health to maintain, restore, and enhance a high quality of life across the region.
- **Equity:** Ensure that equitable water benefits and water services are accessible and shared amongst all residents and communities.

Staff highlighted their commitment to not overstep local control, but also reiterated the need to act regionally on these water objectives, at all levels of government in the metropolitan area. The next steps for this work will involve drafting policies for each of these objectives. This work will include Environmental Services leadership, Environment Committee members, advisory committees, stakeholder groups and a public comment period by Summer of 2024. Click [HERE](#) to view the slides from Tuesday's meeting and [HERE](#) to view the Proposed Water Policy Plan Table of Contents Summary.

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

Metropolitan Council 2024 Unified Budget Adopted

On Wednesday evening, the Metropolitan Council adopted their 2024 Unified Budget and the Payable 2024 Tax Levies. The final property tax levies are consistent with the preliminary levies which were adopted by the Council in August.

The final 2024 Unified Budget is consistent with the budget that was adopted for public comment in October, with a few changes due to the state's November 2023 forecast. First, the Motor Vehicle Sales Tax (MVST) revenues have been increased by \$18.8 million, or 5.3%. This provides revenue additions in Bus Operations, and revenue and expense increases for pass-through grants to the Suburban Transit Providers. Additionally, the State Sales and Use Tax revenues to the Council have been decreased by \$8.5 million, or 2.0%.

The Metropolitan Council budget for operations, pass-through programs, and debt service (loan repayments) is \$1.42 billion. 40% of this budget is funded by state revenues, 29% comes from charges for services (wastewater charges and transit fares), 15% from federal sources, 7% from property taxes, and 8% from reserves. You can view the final 2024 Unified Budget [HERE](#), and the information item [HERE](#).

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