

## **Annual Public Housing Agency Plan Receives Hearing**

On Wednesday, the Metropolitan Council of the Whole [heard a staff update](#) on a [draft 2024 Public Housing Agency Plan](#). The 2024 Public Housing Agency (PHA) Plan serves as a guide to HUD, participants, and the public about the program. Metropolitan Council Housing and Redevelopment Authority staff shared information on proposed changes to the plan, as well as engagement efforts with residents who are using housing vouchers. This meeting sets the stage for a public hearing on August 18<sup>th</sup>.

Questions? Please contact Ania McDonnell at [ania@metrocitiesmn.org](mailto:ania@metrocitiesmn.org).

## **New Federal Funding for Housing**

Last week, the Biden-Harris Administration announced a variety of new housing programs. The first program, [Pathways to Removing Obstacles to Housing](#) will provide grant funding to local governments to identify and remove barriers to affordable housing production and preservation. Grants will be up to \$10 million for jurisdictions for planning and policy activities to allow for higher-density zoning and rezoning. The second program will provide financing for energy efficient, climate resiliency housing and clean energy investments through the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and HUD. Finally, a new interagency working group will develop and advance federal funding opportunities to support the conversion of commercial properties to residential. HUD announced new funding to support research on office-to-residential conversions and will produce a guide for state and local policymakers on making these projects viable. For more information on the new programs, read the press release [HERE](#).

## **Funding Now Available for Urban and Community Forest Management**

Following the 2023 legislative session, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has more than \$25 million available for urban and community forest management. This funding is divided between ReLeaf grants and Shade Tree Program Bonding Grants. Neither program requires a minimum match from applicants and both have a maximum award amount of \$500,000. Click [HERE](#) to view the DNR's community forestry webpage for more information.

ReLeaf Grants are available to tribal governments, local governments, and nonprofit entities. There is \$6.9 million available in the first round of ReLeaf grants with a similar amount expected to be available next year. ReLeaf grants can be used to address emerald ash borer and other forest issues. Recipients can use funds for tree inventories, management plans, tree stump removal, tree planting, chemical treatment, education, outreach, and more. These funds can also be used on residential land that is owned or serves low-income residents. **Applications are open and will be accepted through Monday, September 18.**

Shade Tree Program Bonding Grants are available to tribal and local units of government. There is \$10.1 million available for these grants. These funds can be used to remove and replant shade trees to provide environmental benefits, replace trees lost to forest pests (such as EAB), replace trees lost to storms, and plant trees to establish a more diverse community forest. These eligible

activities must be on public land. **Applications are open and will be accepted through Monday, October 2.**

The DNR will host several in-person informational sessions for those interested in learning more about these grant programs. Click [HERE](#) to see dates and locations.

Contact [ucf.dnr@state.mn.us](mailto:ucf.dnr@state.mn.us) or Mike Lund at [michael@metrocitiesmn.org](mailto:michael@metrocitiesmn.org) or 651-215-4003 with any questions.

## **Minnesota Highway Freight Program Funding Opportunity**

The Minnesota Highway Freight Program (MHFP) is a grant program designed to improve freight safety, mobility, intermodal facilities and first and last mile connections to key destinations. Cities, along with other public sector entities are eligible to apply. Up to \$64 million will be made available for this round of MHFP funding. MHFP funds may provide up to 80% of the project's cost. Projects on the interstate system may receive up to 90% of the project's cost in MHFP funds. The maximum award amount is \$21.6 million. Applications for the MHFP are due by **11:59 PM on Friday, October 13, 2023.**

Projects eligible for funding through this program could include:

- Railroad at-grade crossing improvements
- Truck parking
- Weigh station improvements
- Freight mobility projects, such as interchanges or bypass lanes to address freight bottlenecks
- Improving access to freight-generating facilities or industrial areas
- Intermodal projects, such as airport or other transfer stations and ports and waterways

MnDOT is hosting an informational webinar on Monday, August 21 at 1:00 PM for those interested in learning more. Click [HERE](#) to view the MHFP webpage, which contains a link to the MHFP application and a map of previously awarded projects.

Contact Mike Lund at [michael@metrocitiesmn.org](mailto:michael@metrocitiesmn.org) or 651-215-4003 with any questions.

## **Quarterly Transit Safety and Security Update**

Several representatives from Metro Transit came before the Metropolitan Council to deliver their quarterly report on the agency's Safety & Security Action Plan. The plan was developed following a Citizens League Transit Safety engagement effort and a Council-led Metro Transit Police Work Group.

The discussion began with updates from Metro Transit PD Chief Ernest Morales III. Chief Morales provided recent data on calls for services, types of crimes occurring on the system, the frequency of code of conduct violations, and how officers are being deployed to tackle these issues. Chief Morales also provided recent MTPD activity around officer recruitment.

Metro Transit staff continued by offering some examples of how MTPD is implementing their Action Plan in the following areas:

- Improving Conditions on the System
- Training and Supporting Employees
- Engaging Customers and Partners

Staff also discussed how the transit agency is implementing several initiatives contained in recently passed state legislation. These include the Transit Service Intervention Project, the Transit Rider Investment Program, cleaning and repair standards and reporting, the development of a new rider code of conduct, and a legislative report on transit safety and rider experience.

Click [HERE](#) to view the presentation materials, which contain more detailed policing data and information on specific action items found in the plan. Click [HERE](#) to view the full report for the Quarter 2, 2023 Update.

Contact Mike Lund at [michael@metrocitiesmn.org](mailto:michael@metrocitiesmn.org) or 651-215-4003 with any questions.

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