2026 Transportation & General Government Policy Committee Roster

Name	Title	Organization
Kristin Asher	Public Works Director	Richfield
Josh Berg	Councilmember	Elko New Market
Kissy Coakley	Councilmember	Minnetonka
Marc Culver	Public Works Director	Brooklyn Park
Inderia Falana	Government Relations Representative	Minneapolis
Clancy Ferris	Legislative and Grants Analyst	St. Louis Park
**Anne Finn	IGR Director	League of MN Cities
Tom Fischer	Mayor	Little Canada
Tom Fletcher	Mayor	Greenwood
Rick Getschow	City Manager	Eden Prairie
Gary Hansen	Councilmember	Eagan
Sean Hayford Oleary	Councilmember	Richfield
Debra Heiser	Engineering Director	St. Louis Park
Laurie Hokkanen	City Manager	Chanhassen
Clint Hooppaw	Mayor	Apple Valley
Taylor Hubbard	Mayor	Chaska
Steven Huser	Sr. Government Relations Representative	Minneapolis
Cheryl Jacobson	City Administrator	Mendota Heights
**Craig Johnson	IGR Representative	League of MN Cities
Dan Kealey	Councilmember	Burnsville
**Tori Kee	IGR Representative/Attorney	League of MN Cities
Brad Larson	City Administrator	Savage
Brady Lee	Public Works Director	Victoria
**Daniel Lightfoot	IGR Representative	League of MN Cities
Brent Mareck	City Manager	Carver
Amada Marquez Simula	Mayor	Columbia Heights
Justin Miller	City Administrator	Lakeville
Steve Morris	Councilmember	Woodbury
*Heidi Nelson	City Administrator	Maple Grove
Kari Niedfeldt-Thomas	Mayor	New Brighton
Jennifer O’Rourke	IGR Director	St. Paul
Loren Olson	Senior Government Relations Representative	Minneapolis
**Hannah Pallmeyer	Government Affairs Liaison	Metropolitan Council
Nick Peterson	City Engineer	St. Paul
Chris Queitzsch	Councilmember	Golden Valley
Mark Ray	Public Works Director	Burnsville
Tim Sandvik	City Manager	Robbinsdale
Rebecca Schack	Mayor	Minnetonka
Jay Stroebel	City Manager	Brooklyn Park

Michael Thompson	Public Works Director	Plymouth
Kate Thunstrom	City Administrator	St. Francis
Katie Topinka	IGR Director	Minneapolis
Nikki Villavicencio	Councilmember	Maplewood
Jeff Weisensel	Mayor	Rosemount
Rochelle Widmer	Director of Engineering & Facilities	Columbia Heights
**Owen Wirth	Intergovernmental Relations Representative	League of MN Cities
Wally Wysopal	City Manager	Fridley
Nyle Zikmund	City Administrator	Mounds View

*Committee Chair   **Guest/Non-City Official

METRO CITIES
Association of Metropolitan Municipalities

July 20, 2026

TO: Transportation & General Government Policy Committee Members
FROM: Heidi Nelson, City Administrator, City of Maple Grove
SUBJECT: Meeting Notice and Agenda

Monday, July 27, 2026
9:00 am – 11:30 am
Hybrid Meeting: Lake
Superior Room/LMC Building
or
Join Zoom Meeting:

- Committee meetings are hybrid; members are encouraged to attend in person when at all possible. Thank you for agreeing to be a policy committee member!

Attached are the materials for the first Transportation & General Government Policy Committee meeting. Please take the time to review the policies and come with your ideas and suggestions.

AGENDA

1. Call to order.
2. Introduction of Committee Chair and Members.
3. Policy Committee Process and Protocols (Patricia Nauman, Executive Director)
4. Policy Committee Memo Review (Mike Lund, Government Relations Specialist)
5. 2026 Legislative Session Review (Mike Lund, Government Relations Specialist)
6. Discussion of policies, suggestions, and ideas for new policies.
7. Discuss ideas for speakers and new issues for consideration.
8. Other business.
9. Adjourn. (11:30 a.m.)

Future Committee Meetings:
Monday, August 24, 2026
Monday, September 28, 2026

To: Metro Cities Policy Committees
From: Patricia Nauman, Executive Director
Re: Policy Committee Protocols

General

Metro Cities welcomes members to the policy setting process. Each year, four standing policy committees identify common objectives, and recommend association legislative policies by consensus. Once recommended, policies are transmitted to the Metro Cities Board of Directors for approval and then to the association's general membership for final adoption. Policies guide Metro Cities' work at the state and regional levels of government.

Metro Cities' legislative policies are principally grounded in the need for sufficient resources as well as local flexibility and autonomy in addressing local needs, opposition to state directives that erode local decision making, and the importance of an effective state and local partnership. Members are asked to bring a city lens and perspective to discussions. As a reminder, the committee process is not intended for promoting interests of external organizations or personal interests that are outside or contradictory to the association's mission and objectives.

Committee Decorum and Voting

Appropriate decorum at committee meetings is expected. Members are encouraged to attend all meetings, and when at all possible, to attend in person. Elected or appointed officials of any member city may serve on a committee. Members are encouraged to contribute ideas, feedback, and questions. Comments should be addressed through the chair.

Members attending remotely will be asked to use the hand raise function, or to speak to questions put into the chat. When speaking, members will be asked to identify themselves and their city. Members are asked to turn cameras on when speaking.

Members may offer amendments for consideration. Amendments should be submitted to staff at least a week prior to an upcoming policy meeting to allow members an opportunity to review amendment language prior to the meeting. Amendments that are corrective or technical in nature may be offered orally.

Committee members are expected to present their amendments to the committee. Each city has one vote, and votes are made by acclamation unless a roll call is requested and seconded. Guests are welcome to observe meetings but may not vote or raise issues for consideration.

Speakers

Staff often arrange speakers to provide information on topics of pertinence to the work of the committee, and ideas may be suggested. Speakers must be approved by the Executive Director.

July 20, 2026

To: Metro Cities Transportation and General Government Policy Committee
From: Mike Lund, Government Relations Specialist
Re: July 27th Policy Committee Memo

Thank you in advance for your participation on the Transportation and General Government Policy Committee. We look forward to working with you. Interest has been expressed in several topics for this year, including transit operations, road and bridge funding, elections and more.

The 2026 legislature concluded its business just before midnight on Sunday, May 18. In total, 131 chapters of law were passed this session, but some committees of note, such as Transportation, did not pass an omnibus bill, leaving several issues for 2027.

Throughout the 2026 session, Metro Cities responded to legislation preempting local control and decision-making authority. Cities were largely successful in defeating these bills, in no small part due to consistent advocacy from city officials and staff.

A major highlight from this legislative session was the passage of a capital investment package totaling $1.2 billion. The bonding bill contained funding for key programs in the areas of transportation, water infrastructure, housing, etc. The bill also funded many local projects with 44 metropolitan area cities receiving funding. Lastly, the bonding bill includes $15 million for Inflow and Infiltration grants to assist metropolitan area cities with I/I mitigation on public systems.

Despite the lack of a Transportation bill several funding and policy items of note were discussed this session including MnDOT's local cost participation policy, the provision of transit in the metropolitan area, and autonomous vehicles.

Public safety topics such as gun control, Capitol security, and law enforcement equipment and training needs, received significant debate in committee and on the House and Senate floors. Other issue areas that resulted in legislative action this session include the regulation of congregate care facilities and the establishment of a statewide regulatory framework for massage therapy.

Specific legislative updates will be provided next week at the committee's first meeting.

TRANSPORTATION POLICIES AND FUNDING INTRODUCTION

Metro Cities supports a comprehensive transportation system as a vital component in planning for and meeting the physical, social, and economic needs of the state and metropolitan region.

A comprehensive transportation system includes streets and bridges, transit, and multi-modal solutions that work cohesively to best meet state, regional and local transportation needs.

Adequate and stable sources of funding are necessary to ensure the development and maintenance of a high quality, efficient and safe transportation system that meets these needs and that will position the state and region to be economically competitive in the years ahead. Failure to maintain a functional transportation system will have adverse effects on the state's ability to attract and retain businesses and create jobs.

Transportation funding and planning must be a high priority for state, regional and local policymakers so that the transportation system can meet the needs of the state's residents and businesses as well as projected population growth. Funding and planning for regional and statewide systems must be coordinated at the federal, state, regional and local levels to optimally achieve long-term needs and goals.

TP-1 ROAD AND BRIDGE FUNDING

Under current financing structures that rely primarily on local property taxes and fees as well as cities' share of the Highway User Tax Distribution (HUTD) Fund, road and bridge needs in the metropolitan region continue to be underfunded. Metro Cities supports stable, sufficient, and sustainable statewide transportation funding and expanded local tools to meet the transportation system needs of the region and local municipal systems. Consideration should be given to using new, expanded, and existing resources to meet these needs. Metro Cities supports the use of dedicated taxes and fees to fund transportation infrastructure.

In addition, cities lack adequate tools and resources for the maintenance and improvement of municipal street systems, with resources restricted to property taxes and special assessments. It is imperative that alternative revenue generating authority be granted to municipalities and that state resources be made available for this purpose to aid local communities and relieve the burden on the property tax system.

Metro Cities supports Municipal State Aid Street (MSAS) funding. MSAS provides an important but limited revenue source that assists eligible cities with street infrastructure needs and is limited to twenty percent of a city's street system.

Metro Cities supports state funding to assist cities over-burdened by cost participation responsibilities from improvement projects on state or county highways.

Metro Cities supports flexibility in cost participation policies, especially for those cities with a disproportionate number of state or county highways in and around their local boundaries. The state and counties should have responsibility for the installation, replacement, and ongoing maintenance for infrastructure within their right-of-way including Complete Streets facilities such as trails and sidewalks.

Metro Cities supports state funding for state highway projects, including congestion, bottleneck and safety improvements. Metro Cities also supports state financial assistance, as well as innovations in design and construction, to offset the impacts of regional transportation construction projects on businesses.

Metro Cities opposes statutory changes restricting the use of local funds for transportation projects. Metro Cities opposes restrictions on aesthetic related components of transportation projects, as these components often provide important safety and other benefits to projects.

Metro Cities supports further research into the policy implications for electric and automated vehicles on roadways, transit, and other components of transportation systems. Metro Cities encourages the state to study the impact of electric and automated vehicles on transportation related funding and policies.

Legislative Update:

No omnibus transportation bill passed in 2026. The only transportation funding came as part of the bonding bill.

The 2026 bonding bill included:

- *$47 million for the Local Road Improvement Program*
- *$25 million for the Local Bridge Replacement Program*
- *$1 million for Safe Routes to School Infrastructure Program*

- *$2.9 million for local road improvement planning for Mississippi crossings in North Metro (GF)*
- *$4.5 million for the Local Road Wetlands Replacement Program, administered by the Board of Water and Soil Resources*

As part of the end of session agreement, the capital investment bill contained a one-time reduction in motor vehicle registration fees. Beginning in 2027, tab fee rates will be reduced to 2022 levels for one year. This reduction has a $254 million impact on the Highway User Tax Distribution Fund. The negative impact is offset by a transfer from a general fund to hold MnDOT, counties, cities, and other recipients of HUTD funding harmless.

Chapter 77, "Kayla's HOPE Act," requires data collection on bridge-related suicides, the development of best practices for suicide prevention on bridges, and the implementation of suicide reduction railings on bridge projects where appropriate and feasible.

Bills to regulate autonomous vehicles and on-demand vehicle networks (such as Waymo) were considered in both bodies this year, but no bill passed into law. Some proposals explicitly preempted local regulations or licensing. HF 3513 (Koznick) was the only bill heard in the House and did not pass out of the Transportation committee. The Senate Transportation committee heard four AV bills and ultimately passed a hybrid of those ideas out of committee to the Judiciary and Public Safety committee, where they did not receive consideration. The local role in regulating AVs and on-demand vehicle networks was one of several topics debated as part of this discussion. Other issues included insurance requirements, labor force impacts, and public safety concerns.

In response to declining gas tax revenues the 2025 legislature created a working group to analyze the ways in which similar revenue could be generated by electric vehicle drivers at public charging stations. This work concluded just before the 2026 session. Some legislation was introduced to modify the tax on public charging stations (passed in 2025 and due to begin in July 2027), but no changes became law this session.

TP-2 REGIONAL TRANSIT SYSTEM

The Twin Cities Metropolitan Area needs a multi-modal regional transit system as part of a comprehensive transportation strategy that serves all users, including commuters and the transit dependent. The transit system should be composed of a mix of high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes, high occupancy toll (HOT) lanes, a network of bike and pedestrian trails, bus rapid transit, express and regular route bus service, ride-on demand microtransit, exclusive transitways, light rail transit, streetcars, and commuter rail corridors designed to connect residential, employment, retail, and entertainment centers. The system should be regularly monitored and adjusted to ensure that routes of service correspond to current and forecasted changes in the region's transit service needs and priorities. Metro Cities supports strategic expansion of the regional transit system.

Current congestion levels and forecasted population growth require a stable, reliable, and growing source of revenue for transit construction and operations so that our metropolitan region can meet its transportation needs to remain economically competitive. Metro Cities supports an effective, efficient, and comprehensive regional transit system as an invaluable component in meeting the multimodal transportation needs of the metropolitan region and to the region's economic vibrancy and quality of life. Metro Cities recognizes that transit service connects residents to jobs, schools, health care, and activity centers.

Transit access and service frequency levels should recognize the role of public transit in addressing equity, including but not limited to racial and economic disparities, people with disabilities and the elderly. Metro Cities supports efforts to transition the fleets of transit providers in the metropolitan region to low or zero emission buses and supports using equity and environmental criteria identified in transit providers' zero emission bus transition plans to prioritize the deployment of zero or low-emission buses.

Metro Cities opposes statutory changes restricting the use of local funds for planning or construction of transit projects. Restricting local planning and funding limits the ability of cities to participate in transit corridor planning and development. State and regional policymakers must coordinate with local units of government as decisions are made at the state level on transit projects that also involve municipal planning, funding, and policy decisions.

In the interest of including all potential options in the pursuit of a regionally balanced transit system, Metro Cities opposes the imposition of legislative moratoriums on the study, planning, design, or construction of specific transit projects.

Metro Cities supports a regional governance structure that ensures a measurably reliable and efficient system, recognizes the diverse transit needs of our region and addresses funding needs for all components of the system. These structures must work with and be responsive to the needs of the communities they serve.

Metro Cities supports an open and collaborative regional transportation planning process that fully engages all public transit providers as partners in ongoing policy development to achieve desired outcomes, including establishment of transit project criteria that promote fair and equitable selection of projects throughout the region and transparent regional distribution of available funding.

Metro Cities recognizes the need for flexibility in transit systems for cities that border the edges of the seven-county metropolitan area to ensure users can get to destinations outside of the seven-county area. Metro Cities encourages the Metropolitan Council to coordinate with collar counties so that riders can get to and from destinations beyond the boundaries of the region.

Metro Cities is opposed to legislative or Metropolitan Council directives that constrain the ability of metropolitan transit providers to provide a full range of transit services, including reverse commute routes, suburb-to-suburb routes, transit hub feeder services or new, experimental services that may show a low rate of operating cost recovery from the fare box.

Metro Cities supports the autonomy of suburban transit providers to conduct operations to meet demonstrated and unique needs in their designated service areas independent from the operations of other regional transit providers. Metro Cities supports the ability of a new window to be established for cities to opt out of Metro Transit to either partner with or join an existing suburban transit provider or to establish their own transit service.

Suburban transit providers are concerned that funding challenges may be used to attempt to justify a repeal of their authorizing legislation and to consolidate transit services into a single regional entity. This would result in reverting to conditions existing nearly 40 years ago when inadequate service caused twelve suburbs to elect not to be part of the traditional transit system.

In the interest of safety and traffic management, Metro Cities supports further study of rail safety issues relating to water quality protections, public safety concerns relating to derailments, traffic implications from longer and more frequent trains and the sensitive balance between rail commerce and the quality-of-life impacts on the communities through which they pass.

<u>Legislative Update:</u>

HF 4449 (Jones)/SF 4658 (Dibble) incorporates new performance measures for ongoing transit planning, analysis, and evaluation in the metropolitan region. It establishes a transit system investment framework to guide future projects by the Metropolitan Council. The author's stated goal was to align transit and road improvement projects better to avoid unnecessarily lengthy disruptions for transportation system users and local businesses. The bill achieved this goal by prohibiting transportation projects (state/county/city) that conflict with the Metropolitan Council's framework. The bill also contains a transit-oriented development component that restricts the use of local funds for transit if the area is not zoned appropriately. This bill was heard in the House but did not advance beyond its first committee stop and did not become law.

HF 4111 (Koznick)/SF 4326 (Hoffman) proposed to make the Metropolitan Council the exclusive transit provider in the region beginning July 1, 2027, eliminating the four suburban "opt-out" transit providers. The bill requires an implementation plan be developed, and it establishes a task force to work on the implementation planning. Finally, the bill requires a study to be completed assessing transit service in areas currently served by suburban transit providers. Language contained in HF 4111 required that routes in the suburban transit markets remain "substantially similar" for at least one year. An exception to this requirement is that any of the routes identified as "high subsidy" in the Metropolitan Council's recently completed report can be altered or eliminated immediately. This bill was passed by the House Transportation committee but was not heard beyond that point and did not become law.

TP-3 TRANSIT FINANCING

Shifting demographics in the metropolitan region will mean increased demand for various modes of transit in areas with and without current transit service. MVST revenue projections are unpredictable, and the Legislature has repeatedly reduced general fund support for Metro Transit, which contributes to persistent operating deficits for regional transit providers.

Operating subsidies necessary to support a regional system should come from regional and statewide funding sources and not local taxpayers. Until recently, state and regional resources for transit had diminished, with costs shifting to local taxpayers in the metropolitan area. A system of transit provides significant economic benefits to the state and metropolitan region and must be supported with state and regional revenue sources. In addition, capital costs for the expansion of the regional transit system should be supported through state and regional sources, and not the sole responsibility of local units of government. In 2023, a 0.75% regional sales and use tax in the seven county metropolitan region was established to provide funding for transit operations, maintenance, and capital projects.

Metro Cities supports stable and predictable state and regional revenue sources to fund operating and capital expenses for all regional transit providers and Metro Mobility at a level sufficient to meet the growing operational and capital transit needs of the region and to expand the system to areas that lack sufficient transit service options.

Metro Cities continues to support an advisory role for municipal officials in decisions associated with local transit projects. Metro Cities supports the early engagement of local governments in transit project planning and development including project scoping, cost estimating, funding requests and coordination with overlapping initiatives to achieve successful corridor-based projects.

To promote fair, stable, and predictable distribution of Regional Transportation Sales and Use Tax receipts, Metro Cities supports a collaborative process by which the Metropolitan Council includes stakeholders in the creation of policy guiding the distribution of funds.

Metro Cities supports equitable distribution of Regional Transportation Sales and Use Tax receipts to adequately fund regional transit providers' operating and capital needs. Metro Cities supports the creation of a city allocation from the Regional Transportation Sales Tax to aid cities with local transportation infrastructure.

Legislative Update:

There was no transit or passenger rail funding included in the 2026 bonding bill passed this session.

Chapter 127, the omnibus Health and Human Services supplemental appropriations bill, includes language stipulating that after June 30, 2028, any remaining funds from the $195 million appropriated for the Northern Lights Express project cancel to the newly established hospital stabilization reserve account. The original appropriation for this project was made in 2023 and since then some has already been shifted to other parts of the state budget. Chapter 127 also says that if a full funding agreement with the Federal Transit Administration is not reached by June 30, 2027, the $30 million appropriated for the Blue Line LRT extension project would cancel to the same hospital stabilization account.

Chapter 109, which includes various agency forecast adjustments, appropriates an additional $8.923 million in FY26 and $10.92 million in FY27 (above base funding) from the general fund for special transportation services (Metro Mobility and Metro Move).

Metropolitan Transportation Services (MTS) Director Carlson provided the House Transportation Committee two presentations of note this session. The first concerned "high subsidy" transit routes in the seven-county region. The findings from this report were cited as part of the case for HF 4111, which would have eliminated suburban transit providers. The second presentation covered regional transit governance and finance. This content provided committee members with a history of transit governance, current transit roles and responsibilities, ridership and service levels, and information on regional transit funding allocations from federal, state, regional, and local sources.

TP-4 STREET IMPROVEMENT DISTRICTS

Funding sources for local transportation projects are limited to the use of Municipal State Aid Street Program (MSAS), Transportation Advancement Account (TAA) distributions, property taxes and special assessments. With increasing pressures on city budgets and limited tools and resources, cities are finding it increasingly difficult to maintain aging streets.

Street improvement districts allow cities in developed and developing areas to fund new construction as well as reconstruction and maintenance efforts.

The street improvement district is designed to allow cities, through a fair and objective fee structure, to create a district or districts within the city in which fees are raised on properties in the district and spent within the boundaries of the district.

Metro Cities supports the authority of local units of government to establish street improvement districts. Metro Cities also supports changes to special assessment laws to make assessing state-owned property a more predictable process with uniformity in the payment of assessments across the state.

Legislative Update:

No applicable legislative updates.

TP-5 HIGHWAY AND BRIDGE TURN BACKS & FUNDING

Cities do not have the financial capacity and in many cities the technical expertise other than through significant property tax increases, to absorb additional roadway or bridge infrastructure responsibilities without new funding sources. The existing municipal turnback fund is not adequate based on contemplated turn backs.

Metro Cities supports jurisdictional reassignment or turnback of roads (Minn. Stat. § 161.16, subd. 4) on a phased basis using functional classifications and other appropriate criteria subject to a corresponding mechanism for adequate funding of roadway improvements and continued maintenance.

Metro Cities does not support a wholesale turnback of county or state roads or bridges without the consent of the municipality and the total cost, agreed to by the municipality, being reimbursed to the city in a timely manner. The process for establishing state policies to assign a shared cost participation for newly constructed or rebuilt bridges over trunk highways to local officials, must include input by the local municipalities affected, and any assigned shared costs and responsibilities must be agreed to by the municipalities.

Legislative Update:

No applicable legislative updates.

TP-6 "3C" TRANSPORTATION PLANNING PROCESS: ELECTED OFFICIALS' ROLE

The Transportation Advisory Board (TAB) was developed to meet federal requirements, designating the Metropolitan Council as the organization that is responsible for a continuous, comprehensive, and cooperative (3C) transportation planning process to allocate federal funds among metropolitan area projects. Input by local officials into the planning and prioritization of transportation investments in the region is a vital component of these processes.

Metro Cities supports continuation of the TAB with a majority of locally elected municipal officials as members participating in the process.

Legislative Update:

No applicable legislative updates, but the TAB is in the process of evaluating and scoring applications for the 2026 Regional Solicitation and Regional Active Transportation grant program.

TP-7 ELECTRONIC IMAGING FOR ENFORCEMENT OF TRAFFIC LAWS

Enforcement of traffic laws with cameras and other motion imaging technology has been demonstrated to improve driver compliance and safety. Metro Cities supports cities having the authority to use such technology, including photos and videos, to enforce traffic laws.

Legislative Update:

HF 3966/SF 4377 was introduced and would have authorized transit and bicycle related parking enforcement using transit obstruction camera systems. This bill was heard in committee but not passed into law.

HF 3431/SF 3656 would have made the traffic camera pilot program in Minneapolis and Mendota Heights permanent and would have also authorized all local authorities to make use of this technology. This legislation did not become law.

HF 4943 would have cut the current traffic camera pilot program in Minneapolis and Mendota Heights short, but it did not become law.

TP-8 TRANSPORTATION NETWORK COMPANIES AND ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORTATION MODES

The introduction of transportation network companies (TNC) such as Lyft and Uber, vehicle sharing and other wheeled transportation modes such as bicycles and scooters, require the need for local officials to determine licensing and inspection requirements for these modes, and to address issues concerning management over public rights-of-way. Cities have the authority to license rideshare companies, inspect vehicles, license drivers, and regulate access to sidewalks and streets.

The use of autonomous delivery robots and aerial drones in public rights-of-way is also becoming more prevalent, and cities must maintain and enhance the authority necessary to regulate the use of these vehicles to ensure safe use of the public right of way.

Metro Cities supports the authority of local officials to regulate and establish fees on these transportation modes. Emerging and future transportation technologies have potentially significant implications for local public safety and local public service levels, the needs and impacts of which vary by community.

Legislative Update:

HF 2811 (Meyers)/SF 3236 (Johnson Stewart) would have required those under 18 years of age operating a motorized bicycle or electric-assisted bicycle to wear a helmet. The bill prohibited the operation of a motorized bicycle on a bike path or shared use path. It also included labeling requirements and safety standards for these products. Finally, it established a public education campaign for electric-assisted and motorized bicycle safety (via the Dept. of Public Safety). This bill did not become law.

HF 3785 (Dippel)/SF 4186 (Coleman) modified requirements related to motorized bicycles (sometimes called mopeds) and electric-powered motorcycles (e-motos). The bill clarified their vehicle classification, required registration, required sellers to obtain dealer licenses, and more. The goal of the bill was to clearly differentiate e-motos from e-bikes in state law. This bill did not become law.

HF 3513 (Koznick)/SF 4010 (Johnson Stewart) would have established a regulatory framework for autonomous vehicles and on-demand vehicle networks (such as Waymo). Sec. 17 of the bill explicitly prohibits cities from imposing any local regulations regarding the operation of autonomous vehicles, automated driving systems, and on-demand vehicle networks. Proponents of this bill do not see on-demand vehicle networks as transportation network companies and oppose local licensing of these autonomous ride hailing services. No autonomous vehicle legislation was passed this session.

TP-9 AIRPORT NOISE MITIGATION

Communities closest to MSP and reliever airports are significantly impacted by noise, traffic, and other numerous expansion-related issues. Metro Cities supports the broad goal of providing MSP-impacted communities greater representation on the Metropolitan Airports Commission (MAC). Metro Cities encourages continued communication between MAC commissioners and the cities they represent.

Balancing the needs of the MAC, the business community, and the airport host cities and their residents requires open communication, planning and coordination. Cities must be viewed as partners with the MAC in resolving differences that arise out of airport projects and the development of adjacent parcels. Regular contact between the MAC and cities throughout a project proposal process will enhance communication and problem solving. The MAC should provide full funding for noise mitigation for all structures in communities impacted by flights in and out of MSP.

Metro Cities supports noise abatement programs and expenditures and the work of the Noise Oversight Committee to minimize the impacts of MAC operated facilities on neighboring communities. The MAC should determine the design and geographic reach of these programs only after a thorough public input process that considers the priorities and concerns of impacted cities and their residents. The MAC should provide full funding for noise mitigation for all structures in communities impacted by flights in and out of MSP.

Legislative Update:

No applicable legislative updates.

TP-10 FUNDING FOR NON-MUNICIPAL STATE AID (MSAS) CITY STREETS

Cities under 5,000 in population are not eligible for Municipal State Aid. Cities over 5,000 residents have limited eligibility for dedicated Highway User Tax Distribution Fund dollars, which are capped by the state constitution as being available for up to twenty percent of streets.

Current County State Aid Highway (CSAH) distributions to metropolitan counties are inadequate to provide for the needs of smaller cities in the metropolitan area.

Cities need long-term, stable, funding for street improvements and maintenance. In 2023, the Legislature established the Transportation Advancement Account which distributes revenue from the retail delivery fee and the auto parts sales tax to counties, cities, townships, and a food delivery support account. Specifically, this account will distribute 27 percent of the revenue collected to cities under 5,000 in population and 15 percent to cities over 5,000 in population.

Metro Cities supports the distribution of revenue deposited into the Transportation Advancement Account to cities, providing sustainable funding for non-MSAS city streets.

Metro Cities supports additional resources and flexible policies to meet local infrastructure needs and increased demands on city streets.

<u>Legislative Update:</u>

No applicable legislative updates.

TP-11 COUNTY STATE AID HIGHWAY (CSAH) DISTRIBUTION FORMULA

Significant resource needs remain in the metropolitan area CSAH system. Revenues provided by the Legislature for the CSAH system have resulted in a higher number of projects being completed. However, greater pressure is being placed on municipalities to participate in cost sharing activities, encumbering an already over-burdened local funding system. When the alternative is not building or maintaining roads, cities bear not only the costs of their local systems but also as much as fifty percent of county road projects.

Metro Cities supports special or additional funding for cities that have burdens of additional cost participation in projects involving county roads.

The CSAH formula passed by the Legislature in 2008 helped to better account for needs in the metropolitan region but additional resources for the region are needed.
Metro Cities supports a new CSAH formula more equitably designed to fund the needs of our metropolitan region.

<u>Legislative Update:</u>

No applicable legislative updates.

TP-12 MUNICIPAL INPUT/CONSENT FOR TRUNK HIGHWAYS AND COUNTY ROADS

State statutes direct the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) to submit detailed plans, with city cost estimates, at a point one-and-a-half to two years prior to bid letting, at which time public hearings are held for community input. If MnDOT does not concur with requested changes, it may appeal. Currently, that process would take a maximum of three and a half months and the results of the appeals board are binding on both the city and MnDOT.

Metro Cities supports the municipal consent process and opposes changes to weaken municipal consent or adding another level of government to the consent process. Metro Cities opposes changes to current statutes that would allow MnDOT to disregard the appeals board ruling for state trunk highways. Such a change would significantly minimize MnDOT's need to negotiate in good faith with cities for appropriate project access and alignment and would render the public hearing and appeals process meaningless. Metro Cities also opposes the elimination of the county road municipal consent and appeal process for these reasons.

Metro Cities supports limiting the use of design-build contracts to projects with a single owner of the infrastructure being constructed or when there is a compelling reason to utilize that type of contract. MnDOT should be required to justify why an accelerated project is necessary. The decision to use a design-build contract should be made with the input and consent of the jurisdictions impacted by the project.

Legislative Update:

No applicable legislative updates.

TP-13 PLAT AUTHORITY

Current law grants counties review and comment authority for access and drainage issues for city plats abutting county roads. Metro Cities opposes any statutory change that would grant counties veto power or that would shorten the 120-day review and permit process time.

Legislative Update:

No applicable legislative updates.

TP-14 MNDOT MAINTENANCE BUDGET

MnDOT has been inconsistent in meeting its responsibility for maintaining major roads throughout the state and has required, through omission, that cities bear the burden of maintaining major state roads.

MnDOT should be required to meet standards adopted by cities through local ordinances, or reimburse cities for labor, equipment and material used on the state's behalf to improve public safety or meet local standards. Furthermore, if a city performs maintenance, the city should be fully reimbursed.

Metro Cities supports MnDOT taking full responsibility for maintaining state-owned infrastructure and property, including, but not limited to, sound walls and right of way within city limits. Metro Cities supports cooperative agreements between cities and MnDOT, which have proven to be effective in other parts of the state. Metro Cities supports adequate state funding for the maintenance of state rights-of-way.

Legislative Update:

No applicable legislative updates.

TP-15 TRANSIT TAXING DISTRICT

The transit taxing district, which funds the capital cost of transit service in the Metropolitan Area through the property tax system, is inequitable. Because the boundaries of the transit taxing district do not correspond with any rational service line nor is being within the boundaries a guarantee to receive service, cities within and outside of the taxing district are contributing unequally to the transit service in the metropolitan area. This inequity should be corrected.

Metro Cities supports a stable revenue source to fund both the capital and operating costs for transit at the Metropolitan Council. However, Metro Cities does not support the expansion of the transit taxing district without a corresponding increase in service and an overall increase in operational funds. To do so would create additional property taxes without a corresponding benefit.

Legislative Update:

No applicable legislative updates.

TP-16 COMPLETE STREETS

A complete street may include sidewalks, bike lanes (or wide paved shoulders), special bus lanes, comfortable and accessible public transportation stops, frequent and safe crossing opportunities, median islands, accessible pedestrian signals, curb extensions, narrower travel lanes and more.

A complete street in a rural area will differ from a complete street in a highly urban area, but both are designed to balance safety and convenience for everyone using the road.

Metro Cities supports options in state design guidelines for complete streets that would give cities greater flexibility to:

• Safely accommodate all modes of travel.

• Lower traveling speeds on local streets.

• Address city infrastructure needs.

• Ensure livability in the appropriate context for each city.

Metro Cities opposes state-imposed mandates that would increase street infrastructure improvement costs in locations and instances where providing access for alternative modes including cycling and walking are deemed unnecessary or inappropriate as determined by local jurisdictions.

Municipal State Aid design standards, while created with local engineering representation, have at times been too restrictive for cities to design and construct complete streets that fit a community's context and address the needs and desires of the community without a variance. Design flexibility should allow for increased discretion by the local community's engineer and design team.

Metro Cities supports updated Municipal State Aid design standards that better acknowledge and accommodate the needs and context of urban cities and that better align with other nationally and/or state recognized engineering design standards. Further, Metro Cities supports changes to the variance process to include an appeals process for any variance denials.

<u>Legislative Update:</u>

SF 4598 (Dibble) was heard in the Senate Transportation Committee but did not become law. This bill would have modified the requirements for obtaining a variance from MSAS engineering design standards.

At the hearing for this bill, representatives from the State Aid Rules Advisory Committee (RAC), which is made up of local government representatives, spoke about the ongoing work to revise the state aid rules. The RAC has been meeting monthly since December 2025 and plans to complete their work at the end of 2026. The recommended Rules revisions from the RAC will be brought into the rule making process as identified in statute. This is expected to take another 6-9 months.

Many of the elements contemplated in the proposed legislation for MSAS design standards have been or are planning to be addressed as part of the RAC's work. Interested legislators are following the progress of the RAC and may reintroduce legislation depending on the outcome of the rule making process.

TP-17 NOISE WALL VOTING

MnDOT's current policy for approval of highway noise walls uses a weighted voting system for residents and property owners adjacent to proposed noise walls. In all cases, a property owner is allocated twice as many votes as a resident that does not own the property. This effectively denies renters any ability to influence the approval of noise walls adjacent to their homes. In the case of higher density housing, a single non-resident property owner can determine the outcome of a noise wall approval for hundreds of residents. If a property owner votes against a noise wall, even if residents overwhelmingly vote for a noise wall, the MnDOT policy results in hundreds of residents being disadvantaged. This is especially concerning considering renters are more likely to be lower income and more diverse. Metro Cities supports a comprehensive assessment of MnDOT's current noise wall voting policy, specifically including an equity analysis of the policy.

Legislative Update:

No applicable legislative updates.

TP-18 PROJECT COST PARTICIPATION

Under current policies with MnDOT and many of the state's counties, cities are responsible for cost participation on transportation projects occurring on state and county systems. These costs include shares of costs related to right-of-way, traffic signals, sidewalks and trails, bike facilities, stormwater, landscaping, and other components of the project. Many cities end up using most, and in some cases all, of their Municipal State Aid funding to cover these costs. This results in less funding for the city's own Municipal State Aid system.

Cities should be given credit and recognition for the ongoing maintenance of facilities in the state and county right-of-way such as snow removal on trails and sidewalks, electric and lighting costs, landscape maintenance and other on-going maintenance costs with which cities incur a large cost of the life of these facilities. As MnDOT and counties begin to embrace the importance of multimodal facilities within their rights-of-way, their funding for these facilities should align with their vision for the installation of these facilities. Metro Cities supports cost participation policies that reduce the burden on cities for state and county roadway projects and shifts more of the cost to the agency with jurisdiction over the roadway; particularly costs for trails, sidewalks, bikeways, traffic signals and the right-of-way to support those facilities.

In 2026, MnDOT is required to provide a report to the Legislature detailing changes to its Cost Participation Policy with changes required to be in effect by March of 2026. Metro Cities supports changes to MnDOT's Cost Participation to reduce, or even eliminate, local cost participation on Trunk Highway projects and stands ready to comment on MnDOT's report and recommend further changes to fulfill this vision of a fair and equitable cost participation policy.

Legislative Update:

MnDOT presented the outcome of their work with local units of government to update their cost participation policy to the Senate Transportation Committee. The policy has been adopted internally by MnDOT and was implemented at the start of FY 2027. The department was legislatively directed to consider a local government's ability to pay in their work revising the cost participation policy. The new policy presented in committee includes a maximum individual project contribution component, which represents a major change in the cost participation policy. The ability to pay provision caps the amount a city would be asked to pay at 0.8% of their adjusted net tax capacity (using a five-year average). It should be noted that non-trunk highway eligible items and any additional items a city wants to add to a project scope would not count toward this contribution cap.

Other topics addressed with more specificity in the proposed cost participation policy include aesthetics, bridges and interchanges, the restoration of a de minimis clause, drainage and stormwater, frontage roads, green infrastructure, lighting, maintenance, *parking, rectangular flashing beacons, roundabouts, bike/pedestrian infrastructure, and traffic signals.*

The only component of the cost participation policy work that requires legislative action relates to local utility relocation costs. Bills were introduced and heard in committee to allow trunk highway funds to be used for relocating local utilities with remaining service life impacted by trunk highway construction projects. This legislation did not become law.

GG-1 MANDATES, ZONING & LOCAL AUTHORITY

To serve their local residents and communities, city officials must have sufficient local control and decision-making authority. Metro Cities supports local decision making authority and opposes statutory changes that erode local authority and decision making.

Minn. Stat. § 462.357, subd. 1, provide cities authority to regulate and set local ordinances for zoning. Metro Cities supports existing state laws that provide for this authority.

Metro Cities supports statutory changes that give local officials greater authority to approve or deny variances to allow flexibility in responding to the needs of the community. Metro Cities also supports the removal of statutory barriers to uniform zoning ordinance amendment processes for all cities, regardless of city size classification.

Metro Cities opposes the imposition of legislative mandates that increase local costs without a corresponding state appropriation or funding mechanism. Unfunded mandates potentially increase property taxes and impede cities' ability to fund traditional service needs.

To allow for greater collaboration and flexibility in providing local services, Metro Cities encourages the removal of barriers to coordination between cities and other units of government or entities.

Legislative Update:

HF 3895/SF 4123, "Starter Homes Act": Numerous provisions in the bill would have preempted local decision making. These included requiring administrative review for certain developments, requiring cities to allow duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes, and townhomes on at least 33% of an area zoned for single family housing, prohibiting cities from imposing a minimum lot size on a greenfield larger than 1/8 of an acre, and requiring cities to allow multifamily residential on at least 33% of areas zoned for commercial uses. These provisions would have applied to cities in the metropolitan area over 1,000 in population. The bill required ADUs as allowed uses and removed residential design standards, and these provisions would have applied to all cities statewide. This bill did not become law.

As part of the wider conversation regarding data centers, several bills considered this session would have prohibited the use of nondisclosure agreements (NDA) by elected *officials and/or city staff. The scope of the NDA bans at the local level expanded beyond data centers to include a broader universe of economic development situations and ultimately no ban was passed into law.*

Some other bills introduced, but not passed this session infringing on local control include proposals to:

- *Ban cities from prohibiting utilities from connecting or reconnecting natural gas or propane to any building or customer.*
- *Prohibit the use of facial recognition technology by government entities to collect data.*
- *Prohibit local governments from restricting motor racing facilities operations.*
- *Preempt local governments' ability to regulate and license autonomous vehicle companies providing transportation network company services.*
- *Restrict city authority over aggregate mining and processing.*
- *Prevent cities from beginning local road projects if they were not adequately timed to coincide with future transit projects along the same corridor.*

GG-2 CITY ENTERPRISE ACTIVITIES

Creation of an enterprise operation allows a city to provide a desired service while maintaining financial and management control. The state should refrain from infringing on this ability to provide and manage services for the benefit of a local community and residents.

Metro Cities supports cities having authority to establish city enterprise operations in response to community needs, local preferences, or state mandates, or that help ensure residents' quality of life.

Legislative Update:

No applicable legislative updates.

GG-3 WEAPONS ON CITY PROPERTY

Cities should be allowed to prohibit handguns and other weapons in city-owned buildings, facilities, and parks and to determine whether to allow permit-holders to bring guns into municipal buildings, liquor stores, city council chambers and city sponsored youth activities. It is not Metro Cities' intention for cities to have the authority to prohibit youth activities. It is not Metro Cities' intention for cities to have the authority to prohibit legal weapons in parking lots, on city streets, city sidewalks or on locally approved hunting land.

Metro Cities supports local control to prohibit or restrict the possession of dangerous weapons, ammunition, or explosives on local government-owned or leased buildings and land.

Legislative Update:

Gun control legislation was one of the main topics of discussion during the 2026 legislative session following the attacks on Speaker Emerita Melissa Hortman, Sen. Hoffman, and their families as well as the shooting at Annunciation in Minneapolis this past summer. SF 2320 (Pappas)/HF 1601 (Hussein), which would have authorized cities to prohibit or restrict the possession of dangerous weapons, ammunition, or explosives in local government-owned or leased buildings and land, was heard in two Senate committees, but ultimately did not become law.

GG-4 911 TELEPHONE TAX

Public safety answering points (PSAPs) must be able to continue to rely on state 911 revenues to pay for upgrades and modifications to local 911 systems, maintenance and operational support, and dispatcher training.

Metro Cities supports state funding for technology and training necessary to provide the number and location of wireless and voice over internet protocol (VoIP) calls to 911 on computer screens and transmit that data to police, fire and first responders.

Legislative Update:

Task force established in Chapter 118, the omnibus safety and security bill, intended to improve responses to domestic violence crime, is required to review current training related to domestic violence cases that is provided to 911 telecommunicators, peace officers, and others.

GG-5 800 MHZ RADIO SYSTEM

Metro Cities urges the Legislature to provide cities with the financial means to obtain required infrastructure and subscriber equipment (portable and mobile radios) as well as funding for operating costs, since the prime purpose of this system is to allow public safety agencies and other units of government the ability to communicate effectively.

Metro Cities supports the work of the Metropolitan Emergency Services Board (previously the Metropolitan Radio Board) in implementing and maintaining the 800 MHz radio system so long as cities are not forced to modify their current systems or become a part of the 800 MHz Radio System unless they so choose.

Legislative Update:

Chapter 97, the omnibus public safety policy bill, establishes a task force charged with evaluating what would be required to transition the Allied Radio Matrix for Emergency Response (ARMER) network to a statewide, state-funded framework. This task force is required to submit their report to the legislature by February 15, 2027.

GG-6 BUILDING CODES

The State Building Code (SBC) sets statewide standards for the construction, reconstruction, alteration, and repair of buildings and other structures governed by the code. A statewide building code provides many benefits, with safety as a primary consideration, including uniformity of construction standards in the building industry, and consistency in code interpretation and enforcement.

Metro Cities supports adopting and amending the State Building Code through the rulemaking process and opposes legislative modifications absent unusual or extraordinary circumstances.

Metro Cities supports an equitable distribution of fees from the Construction Code Fund and collaborative efforts by the state, cities, and builders to identify appropriate uses for the fund, including education, training, and best practices.

The Department of Labor and Industry should collaborate with local governments, builders, and other stakeholders on modifications to the building codes. Proposed changes to the building codes should primarily focus on preserving and improving safety. Impacts on the cost of development and advancing sustainability should also be considered.

Advanced state energy standards reduce energy burdens and costs for building occupants and lower greenhouse gas emissions. Metro Cities supports state funding for programs that support property owners in making energy efficiency improvements, as well as programs available for local governments.

<u>Legislative Update:</u>

SF 5153 (Port)/HF 4545 (Jones) would have required rulemaking to allow single-exit stairway apartment buildings as part of the State Building Code. This bill did not become law.

HF 3179 (Jones) would have established statewide building energy performance standards for public and private buildings of a certain size with a goal of a 90 percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2045. The bill mandates cities to make the necessary upgrades/improvements to their buildings without state funding to help facilitate that work. It also included financial penalties for failure to comply with the unfunded mandates. This bill did not advance out of committee.

GG-7 ADMINISTRATIVE FINES

Administrative fines can be used to moderate local costs associated with traditional methods of citation, enforcement, and prosecution. Metro Cities supports the administrative fine authority that allows cities to issue administrative fines for defined local traffic offenses and supports further modifications to enhance functionality of this authority. Metro Cities continues to support cities' authority to use administrative fines for regulatory ordinances such as building codes, zoning codes, health codes, and public safety and nuisance ordinances.

Metro Cities supports the use of city administrative fines, at a minimum, for regulatory matters that are not duplicative of misdemeanor or higher-level state traffic and criminal offenses. Metro Cities also endorses a fair hearing process before a disinterested third party.

<u>Legislative Update:</u>

No applicable legislative updates.

GG-8 RESIDENTIAL PROGRAMS

Sufficient funding and oversight are needed to ensure that residents living in residential programs have appropriate care and supervision and that neighborhoods are not disproportionately impacted by high concentrations of residential programs. Historically, federal and state laws have discouraged the concentration of residential group homes so as not to promote areas that reinforce institutional quality settings.

Under current law, operators of certain residential programs are not required to notify cities when they intend to purchase single-family housing for this purpose. Cities do not have the authority to regulate the locations of residential programs. Cities have reasonable concerns about high concentrations of these facilities in residential neighborhoods, and additional traffic and service deliveries surrounding these facilities when they are grouped closely together. Municipalities recognize and support the services residential programs provide. However, cities also have an interest in preserving balance between residential programs and other uses in residential neighborhoods.

Providers applying to operate residential programs should be required to notify the city when applying for licensure to be informed of local ordinance requirements as a part of the application process. Licensing agencies should be required to notify the city of properties receiving licensure to be operated as residential programs.

Metro Cities supports changes to Minn. Stat. § 245A.11, subd. 4, to allow for appropriate non-concentration standards for all types of cities to prevent clustering. Metro Cities supports statutory modifications to require licensed agencies and licensed providers that operate residential programs to notify the city of properties being operated as residential programs. Metro Cities also supports the establishment of appropriate non-concentration standards for residential programs, to prevent clustering, and supports enforcement of these rules by the appropriate county agencies.

Metro Cities opposes legislation enacted in 2024 that exempts group homes and assisted living facilities with licensed capacities of six or fewer individuals from local rental licensing regulations. Local communities are best positioned to determine whether residential group homes should be included in a rental housing inspection program. Residents in group homes can be especially vulnerable to experiencing unsafe living conditions. Local inspections ensure that housing meets minimum standards and requirements for safety and livability. In addition to any state oversight, local inspections also ensure that any housing conditions needing attention can be addressed promptly. Metro Cities will continue to monitor the new law and urges the Legislature to consider its repeal.

Legislative Update:

Chapter 121, the omnibus human services supplemental appropriations bill contains several provisions of note for cities regarding the regulation of congregate care facilities (group homes or assisted living facilities with six or fewer residents). Art. 2, Sec. 5 and Art. 9, Sec. 2 require the relevant state agency to notify affected municipalities for newly licensed facilities so that cities can become and remain aware of licensed services operating within their community.

Art. 2, Sec. 4 and Art. 9, Sec. 4 of the law prohibits newly licensed facilities from sharing property or being located at an adjoining property with an existing community residential setting.

Finally, Art. 2, Sec. 7 and Art. 9, Sec. 3 of the law allows the state to delegate property inspection authority to local governments, if the city or county requests it. This inspection authority is limited to applicable physical plant licensing requirements and zoning ordinances. The commissioner must execute a formal delegation of authority that clearly specifies what authority is being delegated to the county agency or local unit of government, that the commissioner is responsible for any costs incurred by the county agency or local unit of government for conducting inspections under delegated authority, and that the county agency or local unit of government must not assess any additional fees for conducting an inspection under delegated authority.

Note: There is also language in Chapter 121 that prohibits licensees (144G assisted living) in the seven-county metropolitan area from relocating outside of the seven-county metropolitan area.

GG-9 ANNEXATION

Attempts have been made in recent years to reduce tensions between cities and townships in annexations. Metro Cities supports continued legislative efforts to develop recommendations regarding best practices and annexation training for city and township officials to better communicate and plan for potential annexations. Further, Metro Cities supports substantive changes to the state's annexation laws that will lead to better land use planning, energy conservation, greater environmental protection, fairer tax bases, clarification of fee reimbursement and fewer conflicts between townships and cities. Metro Cities also supports technical annexation changes that are agreed to by cities and townships.

Legislative Update:

No applicable legislative updates. Several bills were introduced, but none advanced this year.

GG-10 STATEWIDE FUNDING SOURCES FOR LOCAL ISSUES WITH REGIONAL IMPACT

Many issues including, but not limited to, a metropolitan area groundwater monitoring network, emerald ash borer management, perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS/PFOS), and the cleanup of storm-water retention ponds, come with significant local costs, and have effects that reach beyond municipal boundaries.

Metro Cities supports the availability of statewide funding sources to address local issues that have regional or statewide significance or are caused by state or regional actions. Metro Cities opposes any requirement to enact ordinances more restrictive than state law in exchange for access to these funds.

Legislative Update:

See GG-11 for EAB/urban forestry funding. Some individual city projects received funding in this session's capital investment package to upgrade water treatment facilities to address PFAS.

GG-11 URBAN FOREST MANAGEMENT FUNDING

Urban forests are an essential local infrastructure component. Dutch elm disease, oak wilt disease, drought, storms, and emerald ash borer threaten public investments in trees and controlling these issues can be greatly consequential for city budgets. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, through its Urban and Community Forestry program, and the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, through its Shade Tree and Invasive Species program, have regulatory authority to direct tree sanitation and control programs. Although these programs allow for addressing some tree disease, pest, and other problems, funding has been inadequate to meet the need of cities to build capacity for tree programs and respond to catastrophic problems.

Cities share the goal of the state's ReLeaf Program – promoting and funding the inventory, planning, planting, maintenance, and improvement of trees in cities throughout the state. In addition, residents are facing significant costs for the removal, replacement, and treatment of emerald ash borer (EAB). Economic and environmental gains for storm water management, climate change mitigation, air quality management, tourism, recreation, and other benefits must be protected from tree loss. A lack of timely investment in urban forests costs cities significantly more in the long run.

Metro Cities supports continued funding for state programs to assist cities with building and increasing capacity for urban forest management, meeting the costs of preparing for, and responding to, catastrophic urban forest problems and preventing further loss and increasing canopy coverage. Specifically, direct grants to cities are desperately needed for the identification, removal, replacement, and treatment of trees related to management of emerald ash borer (EAB). Metro Cities supports direct grants and/or aid payments to local governments for reimbursement and retroactive relief to homeowners for treatment or removal, transporting and disposal of wood waste containing ash tree material.

Legislative Update:

Chapter 130, the 2026 bonding bill, includes $5 million in GO bonds for community tree planting grants in the metropolitan region (administered by the Metropolitan Council).

Chapter 104, the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENTRF) bill, appropriates $2.6 million to the Dept. of Natural Resources to reduce emerald ash borer (EAB) impacts by providing canopy gap and planting assessments, trainings, technical assistance, and grants for communities to monitor and manage EAB impacts, plant a diversity of trees and engage citizens in community forestry activities.

GG-12 POLLINATOR HABITAT RESOURCES

Recent declines in the abundance of pollinator insects, such as bees and butterflies, have been identified by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization as a threat to food security, as these insects are an important method of plant pollination. According to the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the main threats facing pollinators are habitat loss, degradation, and fragmentation. Pollinators lose food and nesting sites they need to survive when native vegetation is replaced by roadways, manicured lawns, crops, and non-native gardens. This can have added detriment to pollinators that migrate. Research has shown that increasing habitats can create the conditions for these insect populations to recover. Converting traditional grass lawns has been identified as one way to increase pollinator habitat.

The Minnesota Legislature created the Lawns to Legumes program, which provides grants to private homeowners to convert traditional lawns to pollinator friendly landscape. The program also funds demonstration neighborhoods, which are pollinator programs run by local governments and nonprofit organizations. Metro Cities supports state funding to programs such as Lawns to Legumes that create pollinator habitat on both public and private lands.

Legislative Update:

No applicable legislative updates.

GG-13 REGULATION OF HARMFUL SUBSTANCES AND PRODUCTS

In metropolitan regions where most cities share boundaries with other cities, local bans of harmful drugs and substances such as synthetic drugs, which have been found to be dangerous, do not eliminate access to these products unless all cities take the same regulatory action.

Metro Cities supports statewide regulation and prohibition of products or substances in circumstances where there is evidence that products present a danger to anyone who uses them, where there is broad local support for a ban and where corresponding regulatory issues have regional or statewide significance.

In addition, the Legislature should provide for the regulation of products that are known to damage water quality, sewer collection, and storm and wastewater treatment systems, not just at the treatment and infrastructure maintenance levels, but at the consumer and manufacturing levels, through accurate labeling of products, public education, and recycling and re-use programs.

Legislative Update:

No applicable legislative updates.

GG-14 WATER SUPPLY

Municipal water suppliers are charged with meeting the water supply needs of their communities and work to do so with safe, reliable, and cost-effective systems that are sustainable both for established cities and for all future growth.

The aquifers in the metropolitan area cross municipal boundaries and therefore require a coordinated regional approach to planning for their future availability. Currently, approximately 75% of municipal water supply in the metropolitan area comes from groundwater. With proper management of the resource, the current water supply in the region is adequate; however, Metropolitan Council projections predict localized declines in aquifer availability due to population growth estimates if current usage levels are maintained.

Regulation of water is complex and compartmentalized. Various agencies permit its use, plan for its availability, regulate stormwater, treat wastewater and protect the safety of water. To ensure that water supply remains adequate and sustainable across the region, we must understand how much water can be sustainably drawn from the aquifers and what effect increases in re-use, conservation and recharge can have on the sustainability and availability of both groundwater and surface water. Many of these strategies cross agency jurisdictions and will require improved coordination and cooperation.

Municipal water suppliers have made significant infrastructure investments in their systems based on calculated water availability and DNR permits. Proposals to reduce the reliance on groundwater by switching municipal water systems from groundwater to surface water supplies will come with significant costs that could place excessive burdens on local resources.

The outcomes and benefits of re-balancing the mix of groundwater and surface water use for specific municipalities and the region must be identifiable before any projects are undertaken. The sustainability of our water supply is an issue of regional and statewide significance and the expense of any necessary projects that benefit the region should not fall on individual cities. Any attempts to address water supply sustainability must also consider all water users, including municipal water suppliers, industry, private wells, agriculture and contamination containment.

The metropolitan region must consider the effects of groundwater use beyond the borders of the metropolitan area on the region's groundwater availability and the cost of treating contaminants in surface water that comes into the metropolitan area for use.

Metro Cities supports the removal of barriers to wastewater and storm water re-use, improved inter-agency coordination, clarifying the appropriate roles of local, regional, and state governments with respect to water, streamlining and consolidating permit approval processes and the availability of statewide resources to plan for and ensure the future sustainability of water supply in the metropolitan area. Metro Cities also encourages the Metropolitan Council, in consultation with municipalities, to find ways to re-use wastewater and to develop other strategies to improve conservation.

Metro Cities supports state funding for costs associated with converting water supply from groundwater to surface water and funds to encourage and promote water conservation as a strategy to improve water sustainability and to improve and protect water quality.

Legislative Update:

As part of the wider debate on data centers and their regulation, there were discussions concerning municipal water appropriation permits and large water appropriation projects. HF 3007/SF 3320 establishes permit conditions for large water appropriation projects (defined as those with proposed consumptive use exceeding 100,000,000 gallons per year or 250,000 gallons per day). That bill includes language directing city employees contacted about qualifying projects to notify the Dept. of Natural Resources. HF 3793/SF 3852 would require certain users of large amounts of groundwater to apply for their own water-use permit instead of modifying an existing municipal permit. None of these bills became law.

GG-15 PRIVATE WELL DRILLING RESTRICTION AUTHORITY

Cities are authorized to enact ordinances that disallow the placement of private wells within city limits to ensure both water safety and availability for residents and businesses. This authority is important for the appropriate management of local water supply conservation efforts. Municipal water systems are financially dependent upon users to operate and maintain the system. A loss of significant rate payers resulting from unregulated private well drilling would economically destabilize water systems and could lead to contamination of the water supply.

Metro Cities supports current law that authorizes cities to regulate and prohibit the placement of private wells within municipal utility service boundaries and opposes any attempt to remove or alter that authority. Metro Cities supports funding that can be used to cap private wells.

Legislative Update:

No applicable legislative updates.

GG-16 ORGANIZED WASTE COLLECTION

Cities over 1,000 in population are required by law to ensure all residents have solid waste collection available to them. A city can meet the statutory requirement by licensing haulers to operate in an open collection system, authorize city employees to collect waste, or implement organized collection through one or multiple haulers to increase efficiency, reduce truck traffic and control costs to residents.

Metro Cities supports current laws that allow cities to work with existing haulers to achieve the benefits of organized collection or investigate the merits of organized collection without the pressure of a rigid timeline and requirement to pass 'an intent to organize' at the beginning of the discussion process. Metro Cities opposes any legislation that would further increase the cost or further complicate the process cities are required to follow to organize waste collection or prohibit cities from implementing, expanding, or using organized waste collection. Metro Cities supports state funding to local governments to increase the availability of material and organic recycling.

Legislative Update:

No applicable legislative updates.

GG-17 FRANCHISE FEES, ACCOUNTABILITY AND COST TRANSPARENCY

Minnesota cities Minnesota cities are authorized by Minn. Stat. § 216B and Minn. Stat. § 301B.01 to require a public utility (gas or electric) that provides services to the city or occupies the public right-of-way within a city to obtain a franchise. Several metro area cities have entered agreements that require the utility to pay a fee to help offset costs of maintaining the right-of-way.

Cities are also adopting energy policies that use renewable energy resources to light or heat public facilities. Policies and programs have also been instituted in cooperation with the public utility franchisee to increase energy efficiency for all users. Cities contract, at city expense, with public utilities to "underground" wires. State laws also require energy companies to provide more electric energy from renewable sources. The specific amounts vary by type of utility.

Metro Cities supports state policies adopted by legislation or through rules of the Public Utility Commission that provide cities with the authority to include city energy policies and priorities in a franchise or similar agreement with a franchisee.

Metro Cities supports greater accountability and transparency for city paid costs associated with underground utility and similar work performed by electric utilities as part of a local project.

Metro Cities supports legislation authorizing cities to franchise broadband/internet service providers (ISPs) in the public right-of-way and to collect franchise fees from these providers. Broadband Franchising will allow a city to require equal access to the same quality of broadband service throughout a city, to require reasonable build out and system upgrades of broadband systems, to require uniform pricing and other customer service requirements, as well as other public benefits. Furthermore, Metro Cities supports the use of franchise fees on broadband or other dedicated funding to support local community television, which has seen declining funding from cable franchise fees and public, educational, and governmental (PEG) access fees as consumers switch to internet-based streaming over traditional cable tv service.

Legislative Update:

HF 4978 (Freiberg)/SF 4303 (Xiong) would have added clarifying language to the Minnesota Cable Act to allow broadband franchising under Minn. Stat. § 238. The bill would have also repealed the notice requirement for an applicant to become a cable communications franchise. This bill did not receive a hearing and did not become law.

GG-18 ELECTION ADMINISTRATION

Cities play a critical role in managing and ensuring the integrity of elections. Any changes made to election laws should not place undue financial or administrative burdens on local governments. Metro Cities supports reimbursement by the state to local units of government for any costs associated with changes to election laws.

State laws that allow the filling of municipal vacancies by special election on one of four days specified in law, can create logistical and financial challenges for municipalities. Metro Cities supports changes to state laws that allow sufficient flexibility for municipalities in addressing vacancies in municipal offices.

Metro Cities supports laws to increase efficiencies in administering absentee ballots and early voting, to reduce the potential for errors, and to improve absentee balloting and early voting processes. Metro Cities further supports:

• Statutory changes to allow direct balloting for the duration of the absentee voting period.

• Establishing an earlier deadline for ending in-person absentee voting.

• Authorizing cities to schedule election judges to conduct absentee voting at an earlier date in health care facilities.

• Additional funding and flexibility for cities that administer absentee balloting and early voting.

• Requiring the legislature to conduct a cost-benefit analysis for Minn. Stat. §203B.085, which mandates certain days and hours for early voting, weighing the number of voters served by extended hours on evenings and weekends with the cost to local governments.

<u>Legislative Update:</u>

Chapter 102, the omnibus elections policy bill, amends the requirements for the designation or notice that a full-time city clerk will administer absentee voting. The law requires that the municipality must determine whether the municipality's office will be designated to administer in-person absentee voting starting on the 46th day before the election or early voting starting on the 18th day before the election.

Chapter 102 provides for the use of the statewide voter registration system (SVRS) for administering all absentee voting at primary and general elections (optional for town elections). This law requires early voting officials to maintain a printed copy of a voter's certificate of eligibility. Statute is amended to describe the process by which election officials process early voting ballots each day and what to do with excess ballots, ballots in the wrong box, and how to dispose of ballots that are not counted.

This chapter also changes the requirements for when a local canvassing board must meet to give local jurisdictions the ability to meet as a canvassing board without having to schedule a special meeting.

The law includes language providing that for a municipality already designated to or that has already given notice of the intent to administer absentee voting, the municipality and county must come to an agreement by June 12, 2026, and notify the secretary of state whether the municipality will administer absentee voting for the 46 days or 18 days before election day in the 2026 state primary.

GG-19 REGULATION OF MASSAGE THERAPISTS

In the absence of statewide regulation for massage therapy practitioners, many cities have enacted local ordinances that require massage therapists to obtain a local professional license to assist law enforcement in differentiating between legitimate providers and illegitimate businesses fronting as massage therapy establishments.

Metro Cities supports statewide registration or licensure of massage therapists to aid local law enforcement efforts in this area. Metro Cities supports cities' ability to continue to license massage therapy businesses.

Legislative Update:

Article 3 of Chapter 115 establishes a statewide regulatory framework (via the Department of Health) for massage therapy and Asian bodywork. The article contains definitions for the kinds of treatments included in massage therapy and it outlines the responsibilities of MDH which include maintaining a record of names and addresses of registrants. This legislation requires applicants to submit proof of their education and training before being registered by the state. This legislation includes several conditions for which individuals shall be denied their massage therapy registration (prior trafficking or sexual misconduct offenses, for example). The law also outlines how and when the department might take disciplinary *action against registered individuals including fines and/or suspension of someone's registration.*

Section 19 does preempt local massage therapy ordinances (effective July 1, 2028) but does not limit a city's ability to require general business licenses or the ability of a city to conduct a criminal background check on any owners of massage therapy establishments who are not registered massage therapists. Finally, this legislation establishes a massage therapy advisory council to help inform the MDH as it implements these regulations.

GG-20 PEACE OFFICER ARBITRATION REFORM

Many municipalities in the metropolitan area provide law enforcement services and employ licensed peace officers. To ensure the public's safety and trust, and to strengthen collaboration between citizens and peace officers, cities must have the authority to effectively govern local law enforcement agencies. City officials are ultimately responsible for the safety and protection of the local community.

Metro Cities supports statutory arbitration reforms to allow for the discipline, including removal, of law enforcement officers who have been found to have violated local law enforcement agency policies.

Metro Cities further supports a reasonable standard of review in law enforcement arbitration cases, which would limit the determination of arbitrators to whether the actions of an employer were reasonable and consistent with city and agency policies. Metro Cities further supports using administrative law judges (ALJs) or arbitration to address grievances and discipline related to police misconduct.

<u>Legislative Update:</u>

No applicable legislative updates.

GG-21 PUBLIC SAFETY TRAINING AND RESOURCES

Metro Cities Metro Cities acknowledges that the tasks public safety responders have been asked to address are increasingly the result of inadequate social services and programs.

Metro Cities recognizes the need for adequate resources for social service and mental health services and programs to help reduce the need for public safety responders to perform these services. Metro Cities supports allocated ongoing state funding to local governments for public safety purposes such as imbedded social workers, mental health response, training, innovation, and more.

Metro Cities supports tools and incentives such as scholarships and/or reimbursements for local law enforcement agencies to use and help with recruitment and retention barriers.

Metro Cities supports resources for the MN Department of Public Safety to acquire and store with a third-party vendor anti-scale fencing, pedestrian doors, and vehicle gates for local government facilities to improve equitable access to these deescalation and safety tools.

Metro Cities supports establishing a reimbursement program for law enforcement agencies that respond to protests and demonstrations at publicly owned facilities and the homes of elected officials.

Metro Cities supports making the Public Safety Aid permanent to provide ongoing funding to cities to assist with increased costs to police, fire, emergency services, and emergency management.

Legislative Update:

Article 12 in Chapter 97, the omnibus public safety policy bill, details requirements for the sale or transfer of law enforcement vehicles to members of the public. Before these vehicles can be turned over to the public, they must have all equipment or insignia removed (with exceptions for cases where the vehicle is being acquired by the federal government, or another state or local agency, or if it is owned and operated as a collector's item and won't be used for general transportation).

Chapter 118, the omnibus safety and security bill, contains numerous provisions meant to enhance the security of individuals in and around the Capitol complex and throughout the state's court system. Article 1 contains additional funding for this purpose and Article 2 establishes a legislative services unit within Capitol Security. Chapter 118 clarifies that Capitol Security is the lead agency for investigating alleged criminal offenses occurring within the Capitol area. This section articulates how and when other law enforcement *agencies may assume responsibility for criminal investigations and how that responsibility is transferred.*

The law describes how, as part of the legislative services unit and its work, DPS may enter into agreements with local law enforcement agencies for assistance. It lists the sources of funding that may be used to reimburse local agencies for eligible costs and requires the commissioner of public safety to establish a reimbursement process that minimizes submission and implementation burdens.

Article 3 of Chapter 118 contains supplemental public safety appropriations for a variety of programs. Of note for cities, total funding for the Philando Castile Memorial Training Fund (via the Peace Officer Standards and Training Board) is increased to $6 million per year.

GG-22 COPPER AND OTHER METAL THEFT

Wire theft from streetlights, other public infrastructure, and private property negatively impacts communities, by reducing public safety for all transportation modes. These thefts also cost cities hundreds of thousands of dollars each year to replace and repair damaged streetlights.

Metro Cities supports efforts to curtail the theft of copper wires from public infrastructure and private property. Metro Cities supports statutory changes that would require appropriate controls on the purchase and sale of scrap copper and other metals. Metro Cities also supports increasing penalties for copper wire and other metal theft.

Metro Cities supports the creation of an online database for the Department of Commerce, Department of Public Safety, and local law enforcement agencies to have access to sellers contact information and the types of products sold each day at metal recycling businesses.

Legislative Update:

Chapter 124, the omnibus commerce policy bill, amends state law by modifying the required information that must be included when applying for a license to sell scrap copper. Specifically, if the applicant is not an individual, but an entity, they will have to include the name, entity type, business address, phone number, and date of formation of the entity in their application. They will also need to provide an acknowledgement that the applicant obtained the copper by lawful means in the regular course of the applicant's business, trade, or authorized construction work.

As part of their purchase/acquisition record, scrap metal dealers will now be required to make it clear if the seller is an individual or an entity. If the seller is an entity, they will have to include a certificate of authority to transact business in Minnesota and their business tax identification number in the record.

GG-23 EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES

The Office of Emergency Medical Services is the state regulatory entity that oversees and issues ambulance licenses and has authority to designate exclusive emergency medical services (EMS) operating areas, or primary service areas (PSAs), for ambulance providers. Once a provider has been approved to operate in a PSA, the provider is authorized to serve the area for an indefinite period of time. Currently, no other state health licensing board grants providers an exclusive operating area. The Office of Emergency Medical Services is comprised of three divisions for Medical Services, Ambulance Services, and Emergency Medical Service Providers. Additionally, three advisory councils are established to provide input and guidance to the office. Metro Cities supports the local government representation on the Emergency Medical Services Advisory Council. Metro Cities supports regional balance among the membership of the various advisory councils established by the office.

Metro Cities supports allowing local units of government to designate which licensed ambulance service provider(s) serve their community and to determine the appropriate level of service. Metro Cities further supports additional tools, data collection, and local authority that ensure transparency by EMS providers. Metro Cities supports decoupling the professional standards overview role from the service area determination.

Legislative Update:

SF 3902 (Seeberger) would have required certain prehospital care data to be included in what ambulance services collect and provide to the Office of Emergency Medical Services. Data required for collection would have included: total number of emergency ambulance calls, reason for calls, type of service requested, mode of response, mode to hospital, transport destination, patient pay fee schedule, percent transport disposition, and mutual aid given/received (disaggregated by municipality). This annual data would be reported to the Office of EMS and then the office would be required to make the data publicly available. This language was included in the Senate's omnibus Health and Human Services policy bill but did not become law.

GG-24 RACE EQUITY

In the seven-county metropolitan region, people of color represent 28% of the population, and this percentage is expected to grow to 44% by 2050, according to the current population forecast from the Metropolitan Council. As racial and ethnic diversity increases in the region, people of color continue to experience significant barriers in housing, employment, criminal justice, public infrastructure, health, and education, and disparities are becoming more apparent. Across the metropolitan region, many cities are working to examine local policies and systems, to revise the delivery of public services, and to allocate resources to help advance race equity. All levels of government as well as the nonprofit and business sectors have roles to play in addressing race inequities and must work collaboratively to ensure that services and resources are considered, designed, and implemented in a comprehensive, purposeful, informed, and inclusive way to achieve race equity. Metro Cities supports:

• An examination and revision of state, regional, county and city laws, ordinances, and policies to address racial disparities.

• State resources to assist with comprehensive data collection, disaggregation and sharing to ensure informed policy and funding decisions at all levels of government.

• Funding to assist in the development of tools and resources that advance racially equitable outcomes.

• Activating partnerships among state, regional and local governmental institutions, and other entities to advance race equity.

<u>Legislative Update:</u>

No applicable legislative updates.

GG-25 ADULT-USE CANNABIS

The Minnesota Legislature legalized adult-use cannabis in 2023. The law establishes the Office of Cannabis Management, which is responsible for licensing cannabis businesses and regulating the industry. The law includes a local registration process for cannabis business license holders where local governments are authorized to charge a registration and renewal fee. Responsible local governments are required to conduct compliance checks for age verification and the enforcement of local ordinances at cannabis businesses. Cities are authorized to establish, own, and operate a municipal cannabis store. The law also includes an optional, population-based limit on the number of retail locations in each city or county. It is vital that local governments retain the ability to suspend retail registrations for businesses that pose an immediate threat to public health or safety.

The law permits local units of government to establish reasonable restrictions on the time, place, and manner of cannabis business operations and includes a zoning compliance requirement for businesses where a local jurisdiction certifies that a business' plans are appropriate and in line with local requirements.

Metro Cities opposes any efforts to reduce cities' local control and zoning authority related to cannabis. Metro Cities supports legislation providing cities the ability to prohibit cannabis businesses within their jurisdiction.

Metro Cities supports reestablishing the Local Cannabis Aid Account to provide ongoing funding to cities to assist with costs related to the local implementation of legal adult-use cannabis. Metro Cities also supports lifting the cap on retail registration fees imposed by local units of government.

Metro Cities expects the Office of Cannabis Management to work closely with cities as this legislation is fully implemented. This includes working with local governments to create model ordinances and providing technical assistance on cannabis-related issues.

<u>Legislative Update:</u>

Chapter 123, the omnibus adult-use cannabis bill, contains several provisions of note for cities. The bill removes some obsolete language regarding local interim ordinances (which were allowed until January 2025). The law also clarifies that cities must adopt an ordinance to effectuate their time, place, and manner restrictions for cannabis businesses. The law allows the Office of Cannabis Management to waive the local unit certification form if the city does not respond within 30 days or if the city does not inspect cannabis businesses for State Fire and Building Code compliance. Cannabis macrobusinesses with retail endorsements will also now count toward the population-based cap on retailers.

Chapter 123 clarifies how the cap is calculated for cannabis business registrations and how counties develop processes for limiting registrations. For registration caps, local governments issuing retail registrations must have at least one registration for every 12,500 residents and after each increment of 12,500 residents, the number of required registrations must be rounded up to the next whole number of registrants.

The law amends Chapter 342 to allow municipal cannabis stores to contract with private entities for their operation. The law details what data must be submitted to the Office of Cannabis Management by local governments conducting compliance checks as well as what local approval must be provided by cannabis event organizers to the OCM.

Most of the cannabis discussion this session concerned the creation of a new license type called cannabis macrobusinesses (formerly known as medical combination businesses).

GG-26 STREET RACING AND CARJACKING

Street racing and carjacking are issues of concern for cities across the metropolitan region. The highly mobile nature of street racing makes it difficult to prevent or stop. Street racing is strongly associated with other illegal activity and poses significant public safety risks for participants, third-party observers, and the public. The crime of carjacking has serious consequences for individual and community public safety. While data provided by the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (BCA) shows recent decreases in the number of carjacking incidents, more should be done to curb this behavior.

Metro Cities supports state funding to help state and local law enforcement agencies prevent and respond to street racing and carjacking. This could include funding for State Patrol air support and funding for costs, including overtime, associated with targeted law enforcement saturations and Toward Zero Deaths initiatives. Metro Cities also supports state resources to increase the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension's intelligence gathering capabilities and to enhance existing coordination efforts among law enforcement agencies.

Metro Cities supports modifications to state laws to prohibit street racing and activities associated with promoting and undertaking the activity of street racing. Specifically, Metro Cities supports statutory changes that address the activity and associated risks posed by street racing, sliding, and drifting. These could include penalties such as license suspension, minimum impoundment periods, and vehicle forfeiture.

Metro Cities supports consumer protection efforts that require motor vehicle manufacturers to offer antitheft protection devices on certain vehicles that have been shown to be especially susceptible to theft.

Metro Cities further recognizes the importance and value of diversion programs that emphasize behavior modifications, which can help curb illegal activity and minimize recidivism.

Legislative Update:

No applicable legislative updates.

GG-27 PUBLIC NOTICE REQUIREMENTS

Metro Cities State law requires that cities publish certain public notices (ordinances, advertisements for bids, financial reports, upcoming public meetings, elections, etc.) in a qualified newspaper designated by the city. Residents increasingly rely on digital platforms, city websites, and social media for official information, making web publications more accessible than traditional newspapers, especially when local papers are shuttering, reducing circulation to residents while significantly increasing costs to cities.

Legislation passed in 2025 provided clarity for cities when their designated qualified newspaper closes, but this change in law failed to address cities previously impacted by a local newspaper closure. Cities impacted by a newspaper closure after July 2025 must post notices on both their own city website and the Minnesota Newspaper Association's statewide public notices website until another qualified newspaper can be identified. Furthermore, once a new qualified newspaper is identified, it is frequently a subscription-based publication with limited local circulation, thereby undermining the intended goal of broad public accessibility.

Metro Cities supports amending Minn. Stat. § 331A.10, subd. 2 to include a lookback period of at least five years to address the needs of cities with recently closed local newspapers. Metro Cities further supports the repeal of outdated and unnecessary publication requirements that no longer reflect current technology or effectively serve the public interest. Cities should have the authority to determine the most effective means of meeting statutory publication obligations, including whether to substitute or supplement newspaper publication with web-based publication or city-newsletters based on the unique needs of each community; ensuring notices reach the greatest number of residents. Updating statutory publication requirements will enhance transparency, improve access, and allow more effective communication with residents.

Legislative Update:

No applicable legislative updates.

GG-28 CONTRACTING AND PURCHASING

Minnesota statutes stipulate contracting and purchasing requirements for Minnesota cities. The law prescribes the process political subdivisions must use to make purchases and award contracts and requires a competitive sealed bid procedure for contracts or purchases over $175,000. The intent of these statutory requirements is to provide taxpayers with the best value for their dollar and ensure integrity in the process. However, imposing these statutory requirements may, at times, result in political subdivisions paying more for goods and services than private entities under the same circumstances.

Metro Cities supports broader use of alternative contracting and purchasing methods that streamline the process and reduce local purchasing costs.
Specifically, Metro Cities supports authorizing cities to use the design-build procedure and providing municipalities with broader authority, similar to that of private businesses, to directly negotiate contracts.

Metro Cities supports a change to the Minnesota Municipal Contracting Statute that is codified at § 471.345 to allow cities the flexibility to make a contract by two quotes for contracts estimated not to exceed $250,000, but only if the business being directly solicited was either:

• Certified as a small business enterprise by a county-designated small business certification program; or

• Certified by the commissioner of administration as a small business that is majority owned and operated by a veteran or service-disabled veteran.

Legislative Update:

Chapter 90 requires that public contracting agencies provide information (when it is requested in writing) to contractors or subcontractors regarding payment amounts, payment dates, and payment applications submitted by the contractor. This information must be provided for any type of payment made by the agency including progress payments, retainage payments, and final payments.

The law requires this information be provided by the public contracting agency within seven days of receiving the request.

Chapter 90 also includes requirements for public contracting agencies regarding the publication of contact information for solicitations or bids on their website.

Cities and other entities subject to this law are required to provide this information at no cost to the contractor or subcontractor seeking the information.