



# **City of Saint Paul**

## **2015 Legislative Agenda**

### **PRIORITY ITEMS**

#### **Local Government Aid (LGA)**

Local Government Aid remains a vitally-important program for the City of Saint Paul by helping to provide needed public services while stabilizing property taxes. Even after the needed LGA increases in 2013 and 2014, however, LGA is still nearly \$14 million less than the amount certified for the city in 2003, and approximately \$45 million less than the 2003 certified amount after adjusting for inflation. This shortfall puts a significant and continued strain on city resources and creates instability in city budgeting.

The City supports full funding of LGA to at least the 2003 certified funding level and the addition of an annual adjustment growth factor to account for the continued rising costs of providing city services and reduce the year-to-year volatility of aid levels that cities receive.

#### **Transportation Financing**

The availability of transportation funding resources continues to significantly lag behind need, including for local units of government. As our transportation system continues to deteriorate, our costs will only increase and our service levels decrease. This includes costs to our local roads, bridges, transit service, and alternative modes of transportation, including bikes systems.

The City supports a new comprehensive transportation financing package that invests in roads, bridges, and transit, and gives cities the resources and funding tools they need to meet their growing needs. This should include a new, dedicated revenue stream for city roads; an increased investment in transit in the East Metro to help build a 21<sup>st</sup> century transit system; and an infusion of resources to help repair and replace deteriorating bridges, including the Kellogg/3<sup>rd</sup> Street bridge in Saint Paul.

## **Capital Investment Bonding**

The City supports the following capital investment bonding projects during the 2015 legislative session:

1. Reconstruction of Kellogg Bridge - \$40 million
2. Environmental Learning Center at the Watergate Marina - \$19.5 million
3. Como Zoo Habitat Preservation Exhibit Renovation - \$14.5 million
4. Regional Public Safety Facility in Saint Paul - \$6.5 million
5. Wakan Tipi Center at Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary - \$3 million

## **Equity Statement**

Minnesota needs to be a state where race does not predetermine opportunities in education, employment, housing, health and safety. Working on issues of equity must entail both institutional and systemic changes and personal awareness and commitment by top leaders. This includes understanding how deeply embedded inequities may be in current policies and practices. The City of Saint Paul encourages the governor and legislature to view all legislative action through an equity lens and that legislation proposed and passed avoid further marginalization and continuing disparities.

## **REVENUE, TAXES AND FINANCE**

### **Local Government Aid (LGA)**

The City of Saint Paul uses state-allocated Local Government Aid to fund critical city services and stabilize property taxes. While the total share of the city budget dependent on state payments has dropped significantly since 2003, the future of Local Government Aid (LGA) remains a key variable in the city's ability to provide basic services, accounting for 24.6% of the city's general fund.

Since late 2008, the state unallotted or otherwise reduced LGA by more than \$45 million over a four year period, which caused a series of budget challenges and the reduction of important city services. Recent increases approved during the 2013 and 2014 legislative sessions were a good step toward renewing a more balanced and predictable state/local fiscal relationship. Even after these increases, however, LGA is still nearly \$14 million less than the amount certified in 2003 and approximately \$45 million less than the 2003 certified amount after adjusting for inflation. Without a continued investment in LGA in the future, cities will continue to face the prospect of having to choose service reductions or above-inflation increases in property taxes, or both.

The City supports full funding of LGA to at least the 2003 certified funding levels, as well as the addition of an annual adjustment growth factor to the formula. Should the state not increase critically-needed funding for Local Government Aid, it must provide local governments with options to generate additional revenue to reduce reliance on local property taxes.

## **Fiscal Disparities**

The City supports the fiscal disparities program, and supports a continued discussion about the importance of fiscal disparities and the need to equalize tax base to provide for a common level of services.

## **Levy Limits**

The City does not support state-sanctioned levy limits which undermine the relationship between local officials and residents in determining the appropriate balance of taxation and service delivery.

## **Ford Site Tax Increment Financing**

The open Ford site in Saint Paul represents a unique opportunity to design and develop a 21<sup>st</sup> century community that will add vitality and tax base to the region. In order to maximize this opportunity, flexibility is needed in regards to development financing options, including tax increment financing for infrastructure. Accordingly, the City supports legislation to authorize the ability to create multiple TIF districts on the Ford site to assist the redevelopment, and to extend the timeline for creation and certification of each TIF district beyond 2016.

## **City Sales Tax Exemption**

The sales tax exemption changes made in the 2013 session and expanded in the 2014 session did not address the complicated and costly process for exempting construction materials. The City supports simplifying the process to receive the exemption for construction materials, as well as extending the exemption to construction materials purchased by third party officials on behalf of the City.

## **Other Revenue, Tax and Finance Items**

- Oppose elimination of the Solid Waste Management Tax.

## **TRANSPORTATION FINANCING**

The availability of transportation funding resources continues to significantly lag behind need, especially for local municipalities. The City supports a new comprehensive transportation financing package that gives cities the resources and funding tools they need to meet our growing needs.

### City Streets

Current funding to city streets is inadequate, leading to growing unmet need. The Transportation Finance Advisory Committee identified \$400 million as the investment needed in local roads for

the state to be economically competitive. Accordingly, new funding distributed outside of the constitutional formula is needed in order for cities to be able to perform the necessary treatment, maintenance and reconstruction to their systems. The City supports new dedicated revenue to city streets. The City also supports at least a \$200 million bonding appropriation to the Local Road Improvement Program.

### Bridges

The City supports funding for a new Kellogg/3<sup>rd</sup> Street bridge to return this critical artery to full capacity and functionality. The current bridge has been deemed structurally deficient by today's standards. Rehabilitation would not address future multimodal transportation needs, such as improved bike facilities and the Gateway Corridor need for dedicated bridge lanes for Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) and possible LRT. Kellogg Boulevard is an arterial roadway that handles approximately 9,900 vehicles per day, and the bridge spans railroads, city streets, the Bruce Vento Trail, and Interstate 94. Bridges across Minnesota need repair and replacement the City supports at least a \$200 million in bonding to the local bridge account.

### Transit Investments

The City supports additional funding for transit projects across the region, including a sales tax increase for metro transit, and strongly encourages a renewed and balanced look at transit projects in the East Metro. This includes projects like the Gateway Corridor, Riverview Corridor, Rush Line, Red Rock, and Robert Street. In order to build a 21<sup>st</sup> century transit system, any new transit funding from the state must recognize the need for a geographic balance across the Metro Area.

The City also supports the implementation of streetcars, including recognition of streetcars as a potential transit way mode for metropolitan regional planning, and the identification of funding for planning, study and construction.

### **Tax Increment Financing (TIF) for Transit Oriented Development (TOD)**

Legislation was introduced during the 2013 session that creates a new type of tax increment financing (TIF) district to finance improvements and cost related to rail and bus rapid transit lines. Increments from the districts may be spent on public and private costs related to transit, such as funding public infrastructure (e.g., station and related improvements, but not the transit line or rolling stock itself) and encouraging private development adjacent to the line (e.g., more dense land uses).

The City will support legislation that furthers the goals of Tax Increment Financing for Transit-Oriented Development. Further, the City encourages the legislature to include parks and open space development as an eligible expense within any TIF for TOD legislation. The City also

encourages the legislature to allow the use of increment from the districts to assist in the development of affordable housing.

## **Railroads**

Saint Paul has 84 active rail crossings and 5 quiet zones, yet has little authority to protect the human and environmental health of our community as it relates to railroads. Our Fire and EMS providers are at the “tip of the spear” conducting response operations, but the planning and coordination required is city and region wide. The City recognizes the important role rail plays in our economy and as a transportation mode for goods, and will monitor all legislative activity related to railroads.

## **Other Transportation Items**

- Oppose any efforts to increase the speed limit on I-35 through Saint Paul, as determined by a federal lawsuit settlement.
- Support MnDOT’s efforts in continued maintenance funding and other additional resources to better meet the department’s needs.
- Support funding for the statewide Complete Streets policy, requiring that all new and reconstructed streets accommodate all users of those streets, including motor vehicles, pedestrians, bicycles, and people in wheelchairs.
- Support funding of a statewide effort to educate motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians about the rules of the road and best practices in order to increase safety and decrease crashes, injuries, and fatalities. Support an increase in penalties to those causing injuries and fatalities.
- Support the selected preferred alternative and funding of the Gateway Transit Corridor extending from McKnight Road to the Union Depot in Saint Paul.
- Support Ramsey County Regional Rail Authority (RCRRA) in the continued development and funding of the Riverview Transit Corridor.
- Support changing state law to give local governments the ability to reduce the default speed limit on residential streets from 30 mph to 25 mph.

## **CAPITAL INVESTMENT AND ECONOMIC STIMULUS**

The City of Saint Paul will support and advocate for the following priority projects in the 2015 state bonding bill:

1. Kellogg Bridge Reconstruction ~ \$40 million  
This request is for \$40 million in design, engineering, and construction funding for reconstruction of the Kellogg –Third Street Bridge. Kellogg Boulevard is an arterial

roadway that handles approximately 9,900 vehicles per day, and the bridge spans railroads, City streets, the Bruce Vento Trail, and Interstate 94. Under today's code standards, however, the bridge's cantilevers cannot support any pedestrian or traffic loads. Reconstruction allows for the bridge to serve growing and changing capacity and modes of transportation, including the Gateway Corridor.

2. Great River Passage Environmental Learning Center ~ \$19.5 million

This request is for \$19.5 million in state funding to design and construct a regional education and environmental center along the Mississippi River in the Crosby Farm Regional Park, along with site improvements. This project will integrate environmental education, river access for diverse neighborhoods, and river-orientated recreation, as well as connect trails at Crosby Farm and Hidden Falls Regional Park. The project is the first phase of the Great River Passage, a true connection of all 17 miles of Mississippi riverfront in Saint Paul. Total estimated cost of the project is \$21.3 million.

3. Como Zoo Habitat Preservation Exhibit Renovation ~ \$14.5 million

This request is for \$14.5 million in state funding for planning, design and construction of the renewal of the Seals and Sea Lions exhibit at Como Zoo. The Seals and Sea Lions exhibit has been a fixture at Como Zoo for over 50 years; yet due to changing federal regulatory requirements for marine mammals, asset preservation of the exhibit is needed. The new exhibit will provide year-round use that meets or exceeds all regulatory and collection management requirements. Total estimated cost of the renewal exhibit project is projected to be \$15.6 million.

4. Regional Public Safety Facility in Saint Paul ~ \$6.5 million

This request is for \$6.5 million for acquisition, design and construction of a regional public safety facility and indoor firing range in the City of Saint Paul. This fills a need to house a permanent public safety facility site for communications, maintenance, training facilities and narcotics and vice unit. Total projected cost is approximately \$13 million.

5. Wakan Tipi Center at Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary~ \$3 million

This request is for \$3 million to design and construct a cultural center at the Bruce Vento Nature Sanctuary. The center will provide interpretive, educational and visitor amenities and services, landscape improvements, as well as improved trail connections. Total estimated cost of the project is \$6 million.

**Other Bonding Support Items:**

- Minnesota Museum of American Art project funding request - \$3 million;
- Minnesota Humanities Center asset preservation and remediation project funding request - \$1.6 million;

- Dorothy Day ReVision facility project funding request;
- Improvements to Pig's Eye Regional Park and Pig's Eye Lake - \$500,000;
- Metropolitan Council's request in state bonds to match funding of Metropolitan Council bonds to improve and expand the Metropolitan Regional Park system;
- Minnesota Amateur Sports Commission's request for planning dollars to design an Urban Regional Sports Center;
- Funding from the DNR's Flood Hazard Mitigation program, or other programs, for a permanent flood damage reduction system in the Lowertown area of downtown Saint Paul for the purpose of minimizing the adverse impacts of flooding in the area.

## **PARKS AND TRAILS**

### **Legacy**

The Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment (Legacy Amendment) increases the sales tax by 3/8 of 1 percent, and lasts until 2034. Proceeds of the tax are distributed into four funds: Outdoor Heritage, Clean Water, Parks and Trails, and Arts and Cultural Heritage. The fund appropriated approximately \$313 million in FY2013, which are to supplement – not supplant – existing state funds.

Legacy resources support projects and programs including regional parks, libraries, Como Zoo, improvements to the Mississippi River, and a host of other items. The City of Saint Paul works closely with nine other metro regional park implementing agencies to ensure an equitable funding formula for the Parks and Trails Fund, specifically.

The City of Saint Paul supports the following positions regarding the Legacy Amendment:

- Overall Fund – Support the equitable distribution of all funds.
- Parks and Trails Fund – Support projects with clear regional or statewide significance and that will ensure equitable funding across metro, outstate, and DNR programs.
- Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Fund – Support more equitable geographic distribution of this fund, recognizing the unique circumstances the Metropolitan area presents related to gaming, habitats, wetlands, prairies, and forests.
- Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund – Support distribution of the Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund in a fair and equitable way. This includes support for Como Zoo, as well as the Minnesota regional library systems in order to provide educational opportunities in the arts, history, literary, and cultural heritage of Minnesota.

For the 2015 legislative session the City of Saint Paul supports fully funding the Como Zoo and Conservatory request for \$1.5 million in Legacy funding.

## **Regional Parks Funding**

The City of Saint Paul Parks Department is one of 10 parks implementing agencies supported by the Met Council's Metro Parks and Open Space Commission. This agency is funded by the Legislature. The Minnesota Constitution requires the State to meet Parks financial needs by 40 percent; current Parks funding by the State is at 11 percent.

The City supports fully funding the Metro Parks biennial budget at 40 percent. Additionally, it opposes cuts to the budget.

## **Emerald Ash Borer**

The Emerald Ash Borer invasive species that is fatal to all untreated ash trees was first discovered in Saint Paul in 2009. Since then, it has already infested hundreds of ash trees throughout Saint Paul and its spread is expected to kill tens of thousands of ash trees, both public and private, within the next decade. Management strategies designed to reduce or slow the spread of EAB are projected to cost Saint Paul over \$15 million dollars over the coming ten years.

- The City supports state or other funding designed to help Saint Paul and other communities slow the spread of EAB and move toward reforestation of their urban forests, including trees that provide millions of dollars in economic, environmental and social benefits.
- The City supports the MPCA application and program funding included in the 2015 LCCMR recommendations that will develop a volunteer forester program with Saint Paul included as one of the pilot cities.

## **Other Parks and Trails Items:**

- Monitor efforts by state agencies to fund Invasive Carp mitigation and population control programs.
- Monitor legislative activities regarding the Mississippi River Corridor Critical Areas rulemaking process.
- Monitor legislation related to pollinators.

## **EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE**

### **High Quality Early Learning**



Support legislative efforts that increase access to high quality early childcare and education opportunities, particularly for 3- and 4-year olds whose families are the most financially challenged, to ensure all children are prepared to succeed in school and in life.

### **High Quality Afterschool and Summer Learning**

High-quality afterschool and summer learning programs have evidence-based benefits that will positively impact the persistent challenges facing Saint Paul's young people, families, businesses, educators, and communities. The City supports a new state public funding stream to fund competitive grants for afterschool programs targeted to youth below 185% of poverty.

### **Youth Jobs**

The Youth Workforce Development Grant program provides key funding for the City's *Right Track* youth employment program. These funds may only be used for year-round employment opportunities for youth who reside in Saint Paul, who are between the ages of 14 and 21, and are economically disadvantaged, or have a barrier to employment as defined by DEED. The City has consistently employed hundreds of youth with these funds. The most recent grant award from the state, however, was \$110,600 less than the prior year's allocation for the summer program.

As the labor force shrinks and disparities increase, public investment in work experiences for low-income youth, particularly youth of color, are a critical strategy to ensuring the future health of the state's economy. To help meet these challenges, the City supports a robust statewide appropriation of \$10 million through DEED for the Youth Workforce Development Grant program. The City also urges DEED to:

- Provide potential recipients with grant information in the early Spring to allow for better preparation for summer and year-round programming;
- Place a greater emphasis on demonstrated ability to successfully manage funds and partnerships that support alignment across systems when determining grant award winners;
- Base their funding decisions on factors including the number and percentage of youth in poverty, youth of color and the youth unemployment rate; and
- Provide additional incentives to encourage greater private sector participation in youth jobs programs.

### **Workforce Training**

The City supports efforts to increase funding for job search assistance, skills training, childcare, and related programs to help people find and retain employment, including:

- A payroll tax credit for job training programs that invest in skilled employees;

- The Minnesota Job Skills Partnership Program; and
- Tax incentives for companies that hire and retain disadvantaged workers.

### **Green Jobs and Energy Investment**

The City encourages the Governor and Legislature to espouse green manufacturing policies that benefit cities, including:

- To incent the manufacture of green products to be used in construction;
- To assist manufactures in incorporating green practices in their production of goods;
- To use green construction products in the development of new businesses or rehabilitation of existing businesses. This would apply both to the buildings housing the business, as well as the equipment within the buildings; and
- To provide funding to support these local initiatives.

The City also supports additional state resources and policies that assist cities in creating sustainable environments for their citizens.

### **Other Education and Workforce Items**

- Support the reclassification of the Central Certification Program (CERT) Application Information as non-public and the streamlining of the CERT application process.

## **PUBLIC SAFETY**

### **Permanent State Funding for the Survivor Resources Program**

Support permanent state funding for the survivor resources program. Funding has been provided in the past as one-time grants, making it difficult for Survivor Resources to budget and accomplish long-term planning.

### **Automated License Plate Reader Technology**

The City of Saint Paul supports legislation establishing a minimum 90-day retention period for Automated License Plate Reader data, as long as the LPR data is deemed to be “confidential” data under Minnesota Law, in order to balance law enforcement’s use of ALPR data for public safety purposes and the public’s interest in the protection of their privacy.

### **“Traveling Data”**

The City supports amending Minnesota statute 13.82 to clarify that when a law enforcement agency in this state receives data from a law enforcement agency in another state, the data are classified in this state in a manner that is equivalent to the data classification or treatment of the data in the other state at the time a request for the access to the data in this state is made.

## **Reducing Gun Violence**

Gun violence is not only an issue of crime but one of public health. Therefore, the City of Saint Paul supports reforms that address many of the areas lacking in our current gun control laws, including universal background checks and bans on military-style assault weapons and high-capacity ammunition clips.

## **Emergency Matching Grants for State Disaster Aid**

Last year, through authorizing legislation, the State Disaster Assistance Contingency Fund was created and \$3 million in State funding was allocated to the Fund. The Fund is to be used to provide the local match for FEMA Public Assistance awards to local government for costs associated with disaster relief. Natural disasters depleted the fund this last spring and summer. A biennial allocation of \$6 million per year would build up a fund balance, increasing the reliability of the fund both short- and long-term.

## **Other Public Safety Items**

- Support the Minnesota Fire Safety Account funding change from a yearly authorization to a standing appropriation to fund critical services
- Adding Minnesota statute 609.496 - Concealing Criminal Proceeds – to the list of forfeitable offenses and monitor other legislative changes to the state’s forfeiture laws including removing DUI from forfeitable offenses.

## **HOUSING, ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY STABILITY**

### **Housing**

Housing is a basic and fundamental human need. While a number of positive measures have taken place to support homeownership, homeowner rehabilitation and renters; there is still a need to address properties in disrepair or properties that have been foreclosed and/or abandoned.

The City will advocate for local government tools to address housing of all types and will monitor foreclosure prevention and remediation activities.

The City supports legislative efforts to:

- Finance rehabilitation of older housing stock in low and moderate income Census tracts;
- Address the demand for housing for the long-term homeless;
- Provide public housing and publicly-assisted low-income housing;
- Provide new housing construction, at a range of income levels;

### **Other Housing, Economic and Community Stability Support Items**

- Support land use and economic development incentives to benefit redevelopment and job creation at the Ford Plant Site.
- Support dedicated State funding for programs at the Department of Employment and Economic Development focusing on women and minority-owned businesses, redevelopment areas and transit improvement areas.
- Support UFCW efforts to create a fund for construction of grocery stores in underserved neighborhoods in urban and rural areas.
- Renewable and Distributed Generation: Support incentives, mandates, and policies that increase distributed generation technologies, such as solar photovoltaic, solar thermal production, wind, combined heat and power for both public and private entities.
- Support expansion of programs to provide low cost financing to improve the energy efficiency of existing homes and buildings, particularly those in low and moderate income communities hit hard by the foreclosure/vacant housing crisis.
- Support legislation to streamline and improve the zoning amendment process for cities of the first class.
- Support legislation creating statewide paid parental leave.

### **OTHER ORGANIZATIONS**

The City of Saint Paul supports the platforms of the following organizations, with the exception of those policies that may be contrary to the interests of the City:

- Ramsey County;
- Saint Paul Port Authority;
- League of Minnesota Cities;
- Metro Cities;
- Council on Asian Pacific Minnesotans;
- The Homes for All Coalition;
- Saint Paul Promise Neighborhood;
- Saint Paul Public Schools.

For more information about the City of Saint Paul's 2015 Legislative Agenda, please contact:

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