



# **City of Saint Paul 2017 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. The City supports full funding of LGA to at least the 2003 certified funding level, \$48 million, 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.

### **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.

### **Local Control**

Cities are often laboratories for determining public policy approaches to the challenges that face citizens and success is rooted in local control to determine how best to respond to the ever-changing needs of a citizenry. City government most directly impacts the lives of people and therefore, local units of government must have sufficient authority and flexibility to meet the challenges of governing and providing citizens with public services.

## **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 23% of the city's general fund.

Since late 2008, the state unallotted or otherwise reduced LGA by more than \$43 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 \$48 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. 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.

### **Midway Site Redevelopment**

The Snelling-Midway site located on Snelling Avenue between Interstate 94 and University Avenue is a vital economic development site for the region. Of the superblock generally known as a major retail shopping district, 10 acres have sat vacant since 2002. This site has been selected as the future home of a professional soccer stadium for MN United FC. The City of Saint Paul strongly believes in the catalytic economic development effect this \$120 million private investment will bring to the surrounding 25 acres as well as the Midway community as a whole. Accordingly, the City supports legislation to keep the stadium site property tax exempt and legislation allowing for sales tax exemption on construction materials used to build the stadium.

### **Ford Site**

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 extend the

timeline for creation and certification of the TIF district beyond 2016. The city also supports land use and economic development incentives to benefit redevelopment and job creation at the site.

### **Local Control**

The increasingly complex and costly requirements necessary for cities to provide services to their citizens require a strong partnership between federal, state and local governments. This partnership should be based upon a shared vision for Minnesota and should allow individual communities to tailor that vision to the unique needs of their citizens. The state should not enact initiatives that erode the fundamental principle of local control in cities across Minnesota.

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

- Support the fiscal disparities program as it's an important tool in providing a common level of services amongst cities
- 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
- Support the Saint Paul Visitor and Convention Bureau's request to increase the lodging tax 1%
- Support simplifying the process to receive the exemption for construction materials, as well as extending the exemption to materials purchased by third party officials on behalf of the City
- Oppose elimination of the Solid Waste Management Tax

## **INFRASTRUCTURE 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 new resources and funding tools needed to meet growing demand.

### **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 outside of the constitutional formula for city streets.

The City of Saint Paul supports funding for the statewide Complete Streets policy; ensuring streets are designed and operated to enable safe access for all users, including pedestrians,

bicyclists, motorists and transit riders of all ages and abilities. The city also supports 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.

## **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. Reconstruction allows for the bridge to serve growing and changing capacity and modes of transportation, including the Gateway Corridor. 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 accordingly the City supports \$200 million in unrestricted bonding for the local bridge program.

## **Transit Investments**

The City supports additional funding for transit projects across the region, including a sales tax increase for metro transit. 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. This includes projects like the Gateway Corridor, Riverview Corridor, Rush Line, Red Rock, and Robert Street.

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)**

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. The planning and coordination required for response operations is city and region wide and spans from initial response through recovery. 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.

### **Safe Routes to School Funding**

The Safe Routes to School grant funds are used for planning and infrastructure projects that encourage more students to walk and bicycle to school by increasing the walkability of the city and by assuring that curbs are compliant with ADA regulations. As part of the effort to more fully support the Safe Routes to School Program, the City supports funding for repairing, advancing and upgrading sidewalks.

### **Public Infrastructure Utilities**

The City of Saint Paul supports legislation authorizing cities to create, as a local option, additional utilities such as a transportation or sidewalk utility, that ensure funding for the maintenance of these public amenities. Cities should be able to impose service charges against property to ensure the maintenance and safety of the right of way for all Minnesotans without having to prove an increase in fair market value or having to determine whether those contributing to the utility fund are taxable or tax- exempt.

### **Lowertown Flood Damage Reduction Project**

The City supports state funding design and build a new permanent flood damage reduction system in the Lowertown area of Saint Paul. The area which includes a significant regional economic asset is heavily utilized and highly populated. Constructing a permanent system would be more cost effective and reliable than continuing to utilize the temporary emergency systems currently available.

### **Other Transportation Items**

- Oppose any efforts to increase the speed limit on I-35E through Saint Paul, as determined by a federal lawsuit settlement
- 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 in all cases
- Support for design and construction funding for a land bridge over I-94 in the Rondo Neighborhood

## **CAPITAL INVESTMENT AND ECONOMIC STIMULUS**

The City of Saint Paul will support and advocate for the following priority projects in the 2017 state bonding bill:

#### **1. Great River Passage Environmental Learning Center - \$3 million**

This request is for \$3million in state funding to assess program, site and federal partnership needs and opportunities, including the potential for National Park Service headquarters. The funds would be used to create schematic design and design development documents

including partnership/governance for the education and environmental learning center along the Mississippi River.

2. Como Zoo Habitat Preservation Exhibit Renovation - \$15.5 million

This request is for \$15.5 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 \$18.8 million.

3. RiverCentre Parking Ramp - \$1 million

This request is for \$1 million to design a new convention center parking ramp. A 2015 engineering study estimates that the useful life of the RiverCentre ramp is 3-5 years without a major investment. Based on the age, deterioration and the repair estimates it was determined the most cost effective option is to demolish and rebuild. A new ramp would insure the continued success of the convention center. The loss of these parking spaces would fatally harm the ability to book conventions and meetings compromising the economic impact to the State, Region and City. In addition, the revenue from the parking ramp is an essential piece of the operational budget of the Rivercentre. If not for the \$2 million plus in net annual parking revenues, there would be a corresponding gap in the ability to operate the convention center.

4. Dorothy Day Phase 2 - \$12 million

\$12 million in state funds is requested to predesign, design, construct, furnish, and equip a Connection and Opportunity Center to serve as an integrated one-stop delivery system connecting persons at risk of becoming homeless, and persons working to move up and out of homelessness, to services that improve their health, income, housing stability, and well-being.

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 \$6.7 million.

**Other Bonding Support Items:**

- Minnesota Museum of American Art project funding request - \$8 million
- Science Museum of Minnesota Building preservation request - \$13 million

- Metropolitan Council request for funding for the Metropolitan Regional Park system
- At least a \$200 million bonding appropriation to the Local Bridge Program

## **PARKS AND TRAILS**

### **Legacy**

Legacy resources are used to supplement and 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 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 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 fish, game, 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 the Minnesota regional library systems and Como Zoo and Conservatory.

### **Parks Funding**

Local parks and trails also support the economic vitality needed to attract and retain a dedicated and qualified workforce. Investment in local parks is important to the future of economic growth, both to keep pace with the needs of those who live and work in Saint Paul and to attract future development opportunities. The City supports the dedication of resources that can be invested in these local assets. Local parks and trails are not constitutionally eligible for Legacy funds therefore the City supports the dedication of other resources that can be invested in these local assets.

The City of Saint Paul Parks Department is one of 10 parks implementing agencies in the Met Council's Metro Regional Parks System. The city works closely with those nine other implementing agencies to ensure an equitable funding formula for the Parks and Trails Fund and to increase the operations and maintenance funding, required by state statute to be 40 percent, currently funded at less than 9 percent. The City supports fully funding the Metro Regional Parks biennial budget, opposes cuts and allowing the Metropolitan Council to maximize investments in capital assets.

## **Emerald Ash Borer**

The Emerald Ash Borer is an invasive species that is fatal to all untreated ash trees and was first discovered in Saint Paul in 2009 and expected to kill 35,000 ash trees. Best practice management strategies designed to reduce or slow the spread of EAB are projected to cost Saint Paul over \$15 million dollars over the coming decade.

The City supports state funding designed to help communities slow the spread of EAB and move toward reforestation of their urban forests that provide millions of dollars in economic, environmental and social benefits.

## **EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE**

### **High Quality Early Learning**

Support legislative efforts that increase access to high quality early learning and education opportunities, particularly for families that 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 and summer programs targeted to youth below 185% of poverty.

### **Youth Jobs**

DEED's Youth at Work competitive grant program provides key funding for the City's Right Track youth jobs program. These funds support jobs for over 600 Saint Paul youth from low-income families each year. Right Track is Saint Paul's pipeline for youth career development and building a diverse workforce. Right Tack brings together the City of Saint Paul, businesses and community organizations to provide employment opportunities for youth.

The City supports legislation that:

- Increases the amount of funding available for the Youth at Work competitive grant and Minnesota Youth Program;
- The timely announcement of grant awards to maximize annual program preparation;
- Prioritizes organizations that demonstrate an ability to manage funds and partnerships that support alignment across systems;



- Bases funding decisions on factors including the number and percentage of youth in poverty, youth of color and the youth unemployment rate; and
- Encourages greater private sector participation.

### **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.

### **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.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION, SUSTAINABILITY & ENERGY INVESTMENT**

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

- To incent the manufacture of green products to be used in construction and assist manufactures in incorporating green practices in their production of goods;
- To improve energy efficiency goals and activities by investor owned utilities;
- To prepare for the impacts of climate change on infrastructure, natural systems and human health;
- To increase distributed generation technologies, such as solar photovoltaic, solar thermal production, wind, combined heat and power for both public and private entities;
- To encourage legislation and amendments to rules to expand source separated composting efforts;
- To increase state funding for the state solid waste block grant program referred to as SCORE to be used for recycling efforts and expansion of organics collection.

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

## **PUBLIC SAFETY**

### **21<sup>st</sup> Century Policing**

Trust between law enforcement agencies and the people they protect and serve is essential in a democracy. It is key to the stability of our communities, the integrity of our criminal justice system, and the safe and effective delivery of policing services. To that end the City of Saint Paul supports legislative changes that are consistent with the recommendations from President Obama's 21st Century policing task force as well as efforts to provide the necessary resources to local governments to implement those recommendations.

### **Reducing Gun Violence**

Gun violence is not only an issue of crime but one of public health. Therefore, the City of Saint Paul supports efforts to reduce gun violence including criminal background checks and the refinement of several statutes to close loopholes.

### **Other Public Safety Items**

The City of Saint Paul supports:

- funding the Minnesota Fire Safety Account with a standing appropriation to fund critical services and the Department of Labor and Industry efforts to transfer authority for adoption of the state fire code to the state Fire Marshal;
- maintaining current state statutes related to fireworks sales and use;
- adding concealing criminal proceeds § 609.496 and engaging in business of concealing criminal proceeds § 609.497 to the list of forfeitable offenses and monitoring other legislative changes to the state's forfeiture laws;
- increasing the crash reporting threshold above the \$1000.00 currently in statute;
- expanding § 609.748 serving harassment restraining orders to include peace officers in alignment with §518b.01;
- legislation that makes the Driver's License Diversion pilot program permanent and available statewide;
- clarifying the registered owner is responsible for parking violations;
- add violating geographic restrictions to § 588.20;
- amending §152.021-152.025 to assign weights to marijuana derivatives;
- legislation related to flame-retardant chemicals that reduces health risks to firefighters and other emergency responders;
- expanding § 609.2231, sub. 6 to include code enforcement officials allowing for escalated charges for assaults perpetrated while performing official duties; and
- efforts to reduce sex trafficking and protect victims

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

### **Housing**

Housing is a basic and fundamental human need. The City will advocate for state and local government tools to address housing of all types and will monitor foreclosure prevention and remediation activities and legislation related to legal warranty barriers to condo development and financing.

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 additional state resources to help construct much needed affordable senior housing;
- Expand 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.

### **Working Families**

People are working harder than ever, but many families are still struggling to make ends meet. Saint Paul recognizes that strong families create strong communities. The City supports responsible statewide solutions that help individuals make a better life for themselves and their families such as paid parental leave, earned safe and sick time and family medical leave.

The city also supports reforms that reduce the collateral consequences for low level driving offenses. Ending the cycle of amassing fines for these offenses and providing opportunities instead for diversion and restitution enables people to access better jobs, work more hours, be reliable employees, and take better care of their family.

### **Metropolitan Council**

The City recognizes that the Metropolitan Council has an important role as a regional policy-making body, planning agency, and provider of essential services for the region. As such the City supports the continuation of the Metropolitan Council as a regional governmental agency and planning organization.

### **Mental Health Services**

Mental health plays a role in everything from poverty to public safety from education to unemployment and homelessness. It can be difficult for people with mental health conditions to access the appropriate treatment at the right time. The City of Saint Paul supports the efforts of

the Mental Health Legislative Network as well as the nine recommendations from the Governor's Task Force on Mental Health.

**Economic and Community Stability Support Items:**

- increased funding for brownfield site remediation programs;
- 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;
- UFCW efforts to create a fund for construction of grocery stores in underserved neighborhoods in urban and rural areas;
- legislation for a local option for licenses that would extend on-sale beer, wine and liquor sales until 4a.m. during the 2018 Superbowl weekend;
- legislation to streamline the zoning amendment process for cities of the first class;
- preserving local municipality's ability to set the fees necessary to protect and promote public health within their communities;
- statewide registration or licensure of massage therapists and opposes legislation that would restrict the ability of cities to regulate massage therapy establishments;
- efforts to increase flexibility in the way that cities contract for large scale, complex infrastructure projects; and
- restoring voting rights to the 47,000 Minnesotans living in our community who are ineligible to vote due to a felony conviction.

**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;
- The Homes for All Coalition;
- Saint Paul Public Schools.

For more information about the City of Saint Paul's 2017 Legislative Agenda, please contact:

Katie Knutson  
Government Relations Manager  
651-266-8519  
[Katie.Knutson@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:Katie.Knutson@ci.stpaul.mn.us)

Adam Prock  
Government Relations Associate  
651-266-6545  
[Adam.prock@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:Adam.prock@ci.stpaul.mn.us)

