

Builders Release Document on Building Permit Fees

The builders' association this week released a [document on local building permit fees](#), its second document this year on city fees related to development. The builders held a press conference at the Capitol on Tuesday to release the document, and were joined by State Representatives Jim Nash, Shane Mekeland and Barb Haley as well as Senators Rich Draheim and Andrew Matthews. The subject of this document is building permit fees, with a focus on the proportionality between fees and expenses. The release of the document was covered by several news outlets including the [Star Tribune](#), [Pioneer Press](#) and [Finance & Commerce](#).

The 2019 Legislature established a Legislative Commission on Housing Affordability and the Senate concurrently established a Select Committee on Homeownership Affordability, and the builders have asked the commission and committee to study their concerns. Metro Cities is monitoring the work of both bodies. The Senate committee has held a first meeting; the commission has not yet met.

Metro Cities has significant concerns that the builders' document uses limited, cherry-picked data to draw sweeping conclusions about local fees and expenses. The document's omission of other applicable data results in a misleading and inaccurate portrayal of city fees and expenses.

Previous Metro Cities newsletters that include articles on this topic can be found here:

- [February 8, 2019 Metro Cities News](#) – “House, Senate to Discuss City Residential Development Fees”
- [February 15, 2019 Metro Cities News](#) – “House, Senate Committees Discuss Residential Development Fees”
- [August 16, 2019 Metro Cities News](#) – “Senate Select Committee on Housing Affordability and Access Holds First Meeting”

Metro Cities staff are working to examine the document and are working with city officials and League of MN Cities staff to gather local feedback on these issues and will provide further updates. Please contact Patricia Nauman at 651-215-4002 or Charlie Vander Aarde at 651-215-4001 for further information.

TAB Approves Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP)

The Transportation Advisory Board (TAB) recently approved the Draft 2020-2023 Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP), and accepted public comments received by the Metropolitan Council. The TIP addresses transportation projects in the region that are prioritized by year, and that use federal funds or have effects on air quality. Projects include highways, transit, bikeway and pedestrian improvements. All metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) must draft a TIP. To view the draft TIP, click [here](#).

TAB Reviews Regional Solicitation Application Change Recommendations

The Transportation Advisory Board (TAB) was presented with draft recommended changes to the Regional Solicitation application process by Metropolitan Council staff at its meeting on

Wednesday. The Regional Solicitation is the method by which federal transportation dollars from the Surface Transportation Block Grant Program and Congestion Mitigation Air Quality program are allocated within the metro area. The funding is distributed among roadway, transit and travel demand management, and bicycle and pedestrian projects. A total of \$199.75 million in total projects was approved in the last solicitation.

The TAB is considering six roadway application category changes. These include adding a pedestrian safety measure to scoring and removing a required \$10 million set aside for bridge projects. Some members voiced concern regarding the removal of the bridge set aside.

One recommendation relates to Bicycle and Pedestrian projects for which the TAB is considering a decrease to the maximum award amount from \$5.5 to \$4 million. This modal category received the most applications in the last solicitation. The rationale behind this proposal is that by lowering the maximum award, more projects could potentially receive some funding. Concerns were raised that a lower maximum amount could lead to phasing projects rather than building them as one project. The TAB will also review a tiered system of small and large projects for this application category.

There are five recommendations related to Housing Performance and Equity criteria being considered. These include lowering the value of Housing Performance scores in application scoring and replacing the current equity multiplier with a bonus points system. The TAB is also considering the creation of a regional policy group on transportation and equity.

The TAB is also considering creation of a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) funding program that would be separate from transit scoring, how best to ensure regional balance of transit funding, as well as creating a Unique Project application category for innovative projects that do not easily qualify under current application categories.

The TAB is scheduled to vote to release the application changes for public comment at its September meeting. To view the recommended application changes, click [here](#). To view the staff presentation on these recommendations, click [here](#).

Metropolitan Council Accepting Public Comments on Draft 2020 Transportation UPWP

The Metropolitan Council is receiving public comments on the draft 2020 Transportation Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). To view the draft, click [here](#). The UPWP outlines and documents the proposed transportation-related planning activities in the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area for the upcoming year. The work program promotes a regional approach to transportation planning in order to achieve regional objectives. The UPWP also documents proposed federal, state and local transportation planning expenditures for the upcoming year. It also serves as the Metropolitan Council's application for US DoT planning funds.

The Council plans to consider final adoption of the program on September 25. The Council will receive public comment until **5 pm, Monday, September 9**.

Comments can be submitted in the following ways:

- Mail: Metropolitan Council, 390 Robert St. N., St. Paul, MN 55101
- E-mail: info@metc.state.mn.us
- Public Comment Line: 651-602-1500

For more information, contact Senior Highway Planner David Burns at david.burns@metc.state.mn.us or 651-602-1887.

EVENT: Metro Local Governments Roundtable on 2020 Census

This is a quarterly meeting of local governments working together to promote participation in the 2020 Census. This meeting invites and includes local government professionals and officials who are organizing and supporting Complete Count activities. This meeting is not itself a Complete Count Committee.

You are welcome to share this invitation within your office or city hall. The group is especially interested in involving community engagement specialists, communications specialists, human rights commissions, and interested elected officials.

Friday, September 6, 2019

1:00 PM – 2:30 PM

Ramsey County Library - Roseville

Community Meeting Room

2180 Hamline Avenue North

Roseville, MN 55113

Click [here](#) for more information and to register. If you have questions about RSVPing, please contact Todd Graham, Metropolitan Council, at todd.graham@metc.state.mn.us. If you have comments about the meeting agenda, please contact Alberder Gillespie, City of Minneapolis, at alberder.gillespie@minneapolismn.gov.

EVENT: Brownfields Funding Resources Workshop

DEED, the Metropolitan Council, and Hennepin and Ramsey Counties have scheduled metropolitan region presentations to help cities and development partners apply for brownfield redevelopment grants. Cities can attend to learn more about grant programs that assist with the costs of investigating and cleaning up contaminated sites known as brownfields. The goal of these programs is to help redevelopment that will yield jobs, increase the local tax base, and leverage private investment.

An overview of the DEED grant programs is available at [Contamination Cleanup and Investigation Grant Program](#) along with applications, forms, and instructions. Applications are due by 4:00 pm on Friday, November 1, 2019.

DEED is hosting/participating in one remaining metro region workshop.

September 5, 9:15 am – 11:15 am in Minneapolis

Walker Library

2880 Hennepin Avenue

Minneapolis, MN 5540

There are multiple opportunities for funding to remediate contaminated sites in the metropolitan area. This workshop will be held in partnership with the Metropolitan Council, Hennepin County, and Ramsey County. A tour of the Sons of Norway mixed-use development will follow the workshop. For more information, visit <https://metro council.org/News-Events/Communities/Events/Local-Grants-for-Cleaning-Brownfields-Sept-2019.aspx>

Please register for this workshop by contacting Marcus Martin at marcus.martin@metc.state.mn.us or 651-602-1054.

EVENT: Water Efficiency Grant Program Informational Meeting

Metro Cities will host an informational meeting on the Metropolitan Council's Water Efficiency Grant Program on **Wednesday, August 28 at 9:00 am** at the Metro Cities/LMC building, 145 University Avenue West, St Paul. Metropolitan Council staff will provide an overview of the grant program and be available to answer applicant questions. Those interested in attending should email Brian Davis at brian.davis@metc.state.mn.us.

Grants are for up to \$50,000 to municipal water suppliers to help increase water efficiency, with the funding to be used for rebates to residents who replace inefficient water-using devices with approved devices that use substantially less water, or for irrigation system audits. \$750,000 is available for spending through June 2022. The 2019 Legislature designated these monies from the Clean Water Fund.

Grants will range from \$2,000 to \$50,000 to municipalities and are intended to lower the costs for residents to purchase and install products that reduce water use, such as toilets, washing machines, irrigation sprinklers, and irrigation controllers. Products must be labelled by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Water Sense program or, in the case of washing machines, by the U.S. Department of Energy's Energy Star program. Funds may be used only for appliance replacement, not for first-time purchases for new developments.

Grant funds will cover 75% of program costs, with a required 25% local match. Residents must pay a portion of the cost of any appliance or water use audit.

Applications will be accepted through **September 30, 2019**. Required application information includes:

- Rebate or grant program design and work plan
- Proposed examples of communications to property owners
- Requested total grant amount
- Estimated annual amount of water saved by the applying municipality

[Details about the program and the grant application.](#)

The Metropolitan Council administered a water efficiency grant program from 2015-17 using \$500,000 from the Clean Water Fund. Data from that program showed an estimated total savings of 52 million gallons of water per year. Metro Cities encourages interested cities to attend the meeting.

Questions? Contact Steven Huser at steven@metrocitysmn.org, or 651-215-4003.

EVENT: Lawn Water Conservation Workshop

University of Minnesota Turfgrass Science in partnership with the Metropolitan Council is inviting city and other officials from the 7-county metro area to attend their remaining Lawn Water Conservation workshop this summer.

Friday, September 20, 2019

10am - Noon

Minnesota Landscape Arboretum

Topics covered include: smart irrigation controllers, soil moisture sensors and why they are an improvement over rain sensors; and water-savings benefits of these technologies and which is best depending on property. Participate in an irrigation audit and learn how to improve the performance of sprinkler systems.

RSVP by September 16, 2019 at the [Eventbrite Arboretum invitation link](#).

The workshop is free with advance registration. Please contact Kristine Moncada at monc0003@umn.edu with any questions.

New House Research Documents on 2019 Laws Relating to Local and Metropolitan Government and Local Lodging Taxes

The Minnesota House Research Department has issued two new documents on 2019 laws relating to [local and metropolitan government](#) and [local lodging taxes](#), for your information.

Metro Cities News is emailed periodically to all Metro Cities member mayors, councilmembers, city managers and administrators to keep officials abreast of important metro city issues. This information is also intended to be shared with city staff.

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Metro Cities 145 University Ave W., St. Paul, MN 55103-2044 Phone 651-215-4000 Fax 651-281-1299
www.MetroCitiesMN.org