



May 7, 2022

Dear Members of the State Government, Elections, Pensions, and Transportation Conference Committee:

Metro Cities, representing the shared interests of cities in the metropolitan region, appreciates the opportunity to comment on the omnibus bills being considered by this conference committee.

**Funding for Local Streets and Federal Match Requirements** – Metro Cities is pleased that the House and Senate have included funding so that municipalities can take full advantage of the dollars made available by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA). (Art. 11, Sec. 2 in the House bill and Art. 3, Sec. 2 in the Senate bill).

**Small Cities Assistance** – Metro Cities supports the \$10 million per year for the Small Cities Assistance Account included in the House language (Art. 11, Sec. 2). Metro Cities is pleased to see that in the Senate language, there is a 100% dedication of the revenues from the tax on auto parts with 7% percent directed to the Small Cities Assistance Account (Art. 10, Sec. 20). This proposal provides cities under 5,000 with stable, reliable funding.

**Transit** – Metro Cities' policies recognizes a comprehensive regional transit system as an invaluable component in meeting the transportation needs of the region and supports the \$31 million included in the House language (Art. 11, Sec. 3) for the Metropolitan Council to help the region compete for grants as a part of the IIJA. Metro Cities also supports the \$1.3 million for replacement service providers to expand and improve micro-transit service.

**Deputy Registrars** – Metro Cities supports changes to transaction fee levels that are set by state law to ensure that local deputy registrars can sufficiently function and meet evolving service needs. Metro Cities supports the provisions in both the House (Art. 14, Sec. 11) and Senate (Art. 8, Sec. 14) bills that increase the filing fee for drivers' license transactions and allocates a portion of filing fee revenue to deputy registrars.

**Metro Cities opposes Article 10, Section 11 in the Senate bill** requiring cities to remove streets from the MSA system if the number of lanes on that street is reduced to one lane in each direction. Metro Cities opposes statutory changes that limit cities' ability to plan for and maintain their MSA streets according to the needs of their community.

**Elections Administration** – Metro Cities supports laws that increase efficiencies in administering elections and opposes any changes to election laws that place undue financial or administrative burdens on local governments. Metro Cities supports language in the House bill that allow accepted absentee ballots to be opened and counted in the 14 days prior to an election as well as the ability for voters to cast in-person absentee ballots using a ballot counter in the 14 days before an election (Art. 3). Metro Cities opposes Art. 6, Sec. 18 in the Senate bill requiring that in-person absentee voting locations be open for the entire absentee voting period and for the same days and hours as the county auditor. This limits a city's ability to adjust voting locations and hours based on local needs.

**Metro Cities opposes Article 2, Sec. 67 in the House bill that would preempt local governments** by requiring cities to allow property owners to install and maintain managed natural landscapes. Metro Cities' policy recognizes the benefit converting traditional grass lawns has on pollinator insects and supports state funding for the Lawns to Legumes program. The decision to allow the installation of native landscapes can and should be made at the local level.

Thank you for your consideration of this letter. Please contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mike Lund". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mike Lund - Government Relations Specialist