



May 3, 2023

Dear Members of the Transportation Conference Committee:

Metro Cities, representing the collective interests of cities in the metropolitan area, appreciates the opportunity to provide comments on the omnibus bills that will be considered by this committee.

Direct Funding for Cities

Metro Cities supports provisions in both the House and Senate bill that direct additional funding to cities including the full dedication of auto parts sales tax revenue, which will benefit MSAS-eligible cities along with other recipients of Highway User Tax Distribution Fund dollars. Metro Cities is especially supportive of the Senate language (Art. 3 § 8), which allocates auto parts sales tax revenue directly to the municipal state-aid street fund, the small cities assistance account, and a larger cities assistance account.

Small Cities

Metro Cities supports ongoing funding for cities under 5,000 in population via the tab fee renewal surcharge and phased dedication of auto parts sales tax revenue in the Senate bill, and via the retail delivery fee in the House bill. Metro Cities also supports the Small Community Partnerships language contained in both the House and Senate bill, which will help small cities make improvements to their existing infrastructure, consider the impacts of climate change, and apply for grants.

Funding for Other Transportation Programs

Metro Cities supports the \$350 million in Trunk Highway Bonds for the Corridors of Commerce program (Art. 2 § 2 in the Senate bill) to help increase capacity, advance economic growth, and provide the efficient transportation of goods. Metro Cities also supports the Senate bill's inclusion of \$45 million for the Local Road Improvement Program (LRIP) and \$45 million for the Local Bridge Replacement Program (LBRP).

Transit Funding

Metro Cities supports provisions in the House and Senate bill that will provide stable and predictable revenue to fund operating and capital expenses for transit in the region. Metro Cities supports Art. 4 § 60 in the House bill, which allocates funding for microtransit service in the metropolitan area.

Federal Funds

Metro Cities supports language in both bills that provides matching funds so that the state and its local governments can access federal funds made available via the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA). Metro Cities further supports the federal transportation grants technical assistance provisions in

both bills, which will be especially helpful for smaller communities interested in applying for federal grant opportunities.

State Patrol

Metro Cities supports the appropriations in both the House and Senate bill for the State Patrol to purchase a new helicopter and hire additional pilots. The use of air support has proven to be highly effective in the metropolitan region in addressing issues like street racing and carjackings.

Safety

Metro Cities supports safety-related provisions in both bills including the establishment of an Advisory Council on Traffic Safety and the legislative report on speed safety cameras. Metro Cities also supports language in both bills that address safety and security on transit.

Deputy Registrars

Metro Cities appreciates that both the House (Art. 5) and Senate (Art. 4) bills include provisions from the Driver and Vehicle Services Independent Expert Review. Metro Cities supports increases to existing transaction fee levels to ensure that local deputy registrars can sufficiently function and meet evolving service needs.

Climate Action Content Mandate

Metro Cities opposes provisions in both the House (Art. 4 § 46, 47, and 52) and Senate (Art. 6 § 5, and 25) bill that would statutorily prescribe highly specific climate action content for local comprehensive plans for metropolitan cities, creating a one-size-fits-all mandate that impedes longstanding regional and local collaborative processes for determining plan requirements.

Regional Governance

Metro Cities acknowledges language in both bills regarding the governance of the Metropolitan Council. Metropolitan cities are responsible for implementing the majority of regional policies and take a keen interest in the governance of the Council. Metro Cities' policies have long supported staggered terms for Metropolitan Council members to alleviate ideological shifts that are not conducive to a long-range planning and operations body. Metro Cities also supports increasing opportunities for local official input into the selection process for members and enhancing transparency in the nominations process.

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

Sincerely,



Mike Lund
Government Relations Specialist