

MINNESOTA ASSOCIATION OF TOWNSHIPS

2021 Legislative Priorities

Efficient. Effective. Accountable. Accessible.



Transportation Funding

BACKGROUND:

- Townships maintain approximately 39% of Minnesota's roads (over 55,000 miles) as well as about 6,000 bridges, of which over 400 are on the deficiency list.
- Road and bridge expenditures are the largest expense for townships, at a cost of over \$170 million per year.
- Current spending is insufficient to meet the increasing demand placed on township infrastructure.
- MAT is advocating for a \$20 million increase.

REQUEST:

- Support immediate and long-term increased comprehensive funding that is sufficient, predictable, sustainable, dedicated (preferably constitutionally), and equitable for townships.

Annexation Equality

BACKGROUND:

- Current annexation law is unfair to townships and their residents as it allows a city to annex existing township land without agreement by the township.
- Townships should be on equal ground with a city when faced with a proposed annexation.

REQUEST:

- Support annexation by contract (also known as "orderly annexation"), which is the preferred method

because it requires agreement of BOTH parties. This method is undermined when a city not party to the contract can take property that is already subject to a contract.

- Support laws to consider landowners' wishes and allow residents a vote on whether they will be annexed.
- Townships should also be able to detach property when the property has not been developed or received additional services under a city's annexation, and move a city parcel back to a township. Current law allows only the city or landowner to detach property.

Broadband Funding

BACKGROUND:

- Robust broadband is essential to the vitality of rural communities and many townships are currently being left behind in broadband development.
- Wireless is only part of the solution. Our members report wireless solutions continue to lack the reliability, speed, and affordability of access available to population centers.

REQUEST:

- Fund the Border-to-Border Grant Program in the amount of \$120 million per biennium.
- Maintain focus on unserved areas as the top priority.

Additional Priorities

Efficient. Effective. Accountable. Accessible.



Transportation Issues

- Provide funding to replace culverts when replacement is ordered by water authority for environmental reasons, not road purposes.
- Require a written agreement with the township before a county can revert jurisdiction of a road to a township, which increase the township's responsibilities, liabilities, and costs.
- Restore 30 MPH speed limit option for Rural Residential Districts.
- Allow townships to place "Now Entering" signs on all state, county, and federal highways.
- Remove cost-barriers from volunteers providing senior transportation services.

Truck Weights

- Require funding adequate to build roads to a minimum 10-ton standard before approving any increase in truck weight limits or sizes.
- Restore right of way management powers related to flexible force mains used to transport animal waste.
- Seek input in the permitting process for vehicles exceeding size and weight standard

Taxes & State Aid

- Increase funding for Town Aid program to ensure full funding of the Town Aid formula.
- Hold townships harmless, dollar-for-dollar, from lost tax revenues by seeking increased, sustainable, and dedicated funding for the Payment-in-lieu-of-Taxes (PILT) program.

- Develop an alternative or supplemental tax reimbursement process based on a pay-as-you-buy approach for all future State acquisition of land resulting in lost or reduced tax revenues to the township.

Environment

- Noxious weeds are a threat to the environment, destroying natural habitat. Allow townships to hold State and Counties responsible for weeds in their rights-of-way.

Government Operations/Elections

- Townships serve as local election officials and protect the integrity of elections. Allow townships to determine which four hours they will have an authorized person available to accept filings on the last day to file for office.

Mandate Relief & Cost Reductions

- Reduce costs of townships obtaining easements across state land, especially for roads sited on school trust land.
- Implement 90-day notice periods for state agency hearings, actions, or comment periods.

Miscellaneous

- Hold utilities responsible for damages they cause in or to road rights-of-way and related infrastructure including culvers and hold road authorities immune for damage to utilities whose infrastructure is improperly placed or marked.