



2026 MLC Legislative Policies

We believe sound policy advances and maintains strong communities. The Municipal Legislative Commission (MLC) supports initiatives that foster the development and prosperity of our cities, businesses, region, and state. Below are MLC's positions on key policy areas that will guide our advocacy efforts during the coming year.

Expanding Housing Production and Promoting Affordable Housing

Meeting the housing needs of our communities is a top priority for MLC cities; however, factors like underproduction during the Great Recession, rising construction and insurance costs, scarcity of developable land, real estate market dynamics, and high mortgage rates have all contributed to a significant housing gap. Limited infrastructure capacity and oversubscribed state funding for higher-density housing are also impacting our progress.

Despite these challenges, MLC cities are on track to meet the Metropolitan Council's 2030 regional comprehensive planning housing targets, with 172,781 permits issued over the past decade—56% for multi-family units and 37% meeting affordability criteria (51-80% AMI). In addition, over 1,500 acres in MLC cities have been designated for multi-family housing, enabling thousands of new medium- and high-density units by 2030. MLC cities are working to preserve existing affordable housing in our communities while also stimulating the production of new affordable units and addressing barriers to homeownership. We should reward cities for meeting their housing goals and provide incentives to continue this important work.

While historic investments during the 2023-24 biennium boosted capacity, we acknowledge that more needs to be done to further expand inventory across the housing spectrum. We need collaborative and innovative strategies to meet present and future housing challenges. It's crucial to recognize that communities are at different stages of development; some are fully developed while others are still growing. This diversity necessitates tailored approaches to greenfield development, infill development, and redevelopment opportunities. Legislative proposals aimed at expanding housing production must carefully consider the impacts on these various development types.

The Metropolitan Council's regional comprehensive planning process offers an effective framework for setting metro-area density and housing production goals, allowing for coordinated efforts across the region while empowering local officials to make land use and zoning decisions. This approach ensures solutions are tailored to each community's unique characteristics, needs, and challenges.

We support policies that increase production across the housing spectrum and provide greater access to affordable options while preserving local control of land use and zoning decisions, including:

- Allowing TIF increment transfers to local housing trust funds for affordable housing initiatives or to other programs to enhance this funding tool
- Providing flexibility to build and use local affordable housing aid (LAHA) funds
- Expanding Livable Communities Act (LCA) grant eligibility to include zoning ordinance updates, supporting local planning efforts that advance housing goals
- Reforming condominium insurance and warranty requirements to facilitate construction of this housing product in Minnesota
- Allowing city councils the authority to implement comprehensive plan changes for redevelopment on a simple majority vote, rather than by a “super majority” to advance new housing projects that might otherwise be blocked
- Increasing funding for existing Naturally Occurring Affordable Housing (NOAH) preservation programs
- Increasing state investment in critical housing programs to promote new affordable housing development

Investing in Infrastructure, Transportation & Economic Development

MLC cities are actively pursuing economic development efforts to attract businesses, create jobs, and boost local economies. According to the Metropolitan Council, MLC cities employ 611,939 people, exceeding the 497,751 employees in Minneapolis/St. Paul. This job growth has led to increased congestion and demand on transit and roads. MLC supports increased, regionally balanced investments in transportation and infrastructure to maintain, modernize and expand our transportation network, including:

Protecting state-local partnerships needed to support essential local infrastructure projects with a regional/state benefit by passing a robust, regionally balanced bonding bill that includes significant investment in suburban communities.

Supporting economic growth through targeted state investments that add new workers, retain high-quality jobs, and attract business development. We support preserving funding for state workforce development programs such as the Minnesota Investment Fund (MIF), Job Creation Fund (JCF) and other efforts that prepare workers for high-demand, living-wage careers.

Authorizing municipal franchising of broadband and Internet service providers, including:

- Supporting legislation allowing cities to franchise broadband/Internet service providers (ISPs) in the public right-of-way
- Allowing cities to collect reasonable franchise fees from these providers
- Ensuring equitable access to high-quality broadband service across all neighborhoods
- Promoting reasonable buildout, system upgrades, and consistent customer service and pricing standards
- Supporting the use of franchise or related fees to fund community benefits, including local community media, public access programming, and digital inclusion initiatives

Enhancing local authority for park dedication and redevelopment fees:

Recognizing the essential role that parks and green spaces play in community livability, environmental quality, and local economic vitality, MLC supports efforts to strengthen and modernize local park dedication tools. MLC advocates for:

- Supporting legislation preserving and expanding city authority to require parkland dedication or dedication fees for new residential, commercial, and industrial development
- Allowing cities to collect park dedication fees or land from redevelopment and infill projects—not only from newly subdivided land—to address increased park and open space demand

Supporting Safer Communities

MLC is committed to ensuring safe communities by giving local leaders the funding, authority, and flexibility to address their unique public safety challenges. Continued investment in law enforcement, fire, and EMS training is essential to maintaining a skilled and responsive public safety workforce. Ensuring timely and high-quality ambulance and emergency medical services remains a growing challenge for many of our cities. MLC supports local control over these services to ensure effective, responsive, and community-driven outcomes. At the same time, new and emerging transportation trends—such as the rise in electric bicycle (e-bike) use—present evolving safety and infrastructure challenges. MLC supports:

Strengthening penalties for impersonating police, firefighters and EMS officers:

Impersonating public safety officials undermines public trust, endangers community safety, and damages relationships between officers and residents.

- Support legislation increasing penalties for individuals who impersonate licensed peace officers, elevating the offense from a misdemeanor to a felony
- Prohibit the display or use of law enforcement equipment on non-law enforcement vehicles, including lettering, markings, insignia, badges, shields, radio antennas, squad cameras, or other equipment that would reasonably cause a person to believe the vehicle is a law enforcement vehicle

Empowering local elected officials to effectively manage public safety issues in our communities by providing additional one-time funding for police and fire aid programs.

Providing local control of EMS:

- Monitor the implementation and rulemaking of the newly established Office of Emergency Medical Services to ensure that local perspectives and operational realities are reflected in state oversight and policy decisions
- Allow local units of government to designate which licensed ambulance services provider or providers may serve their communities and to determine the appropriate level of service
- Provide local units of government with tools and authority to ensure transparency regarding performance standards and quality assurance metrics

Improving e-vehicle safety through consistent statewide standards and public education.

MLC supports modifying state statute to include the same driver's license or motorized bicycle/electric-assisted bicycle permit for riders of any bicycle whose motors are capable of propelling the bicycle without the rider pedaling to promote rider safety. State statute should be updated to include the use of bicycles with motors, including ebikes, according to their capabilities. The required permit training should advance ebike rider safety. Ebike riders under 18 should be required to wear protective headgear, as is currently required for motorized bicycle riders. The minimum age for both ebike and motorized bicycle operation should remain 15 years old. Providing law enforcement officers with better options for reasonable suspicion stops and



violation citations will help to prevent accidents and tragedies. Where appropriate, bicycles with motors should be required to have working lights, turn signals and other safety equipment.

Strengthening the State-Local Fiscal Partnership

MLC supports local control over taxes and fiscal policy. Our cities believe strongly in the promotion of policies that bring greater stability and predictability in the fiscal relationship between the state and local units of government. We support the following goals and strategies to strengthen the state-local fiscal relationship:

Restoring local cannabis aid: Support reinstating state aid for cities and counties to offset the costs of implementing Minnesota's cannabis legalization law, including ensuring public safety, responding to community impacts, and effectively administering state cannabis policy at the local level

Simplifying and standardizing the process for obtaining a sales tax exemption on local government construction projects:

- Establishing a clear, timely refund mechanism that returns sales tax revenue to the appropriate public entity
- Reducing administrative complexity and ensuring tax savings are fully realized by cities, counties, and school districts

Creating a fair and predictable, criteria-based process allowing certain local sales tax regional projects to proceed without legislative approval:

- Opposing tax equalization measures in local sales tax legislation to ensure equitable treatment for all Minnesota cities, both current and future, that impose local sales taxes
- Opposing limitations on similar facilities within a certain distance of the proposed project and requiring support from surrounding cities
- Including metro parks and trails as pre-approved projects for the use of local sales tax dollars
- Including an inflationary escalator based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI) to give cities the funds necessary to cover actual project costs, ensuring that critical infrastructure and community development initiatives are completed as planned

Providing greater stability and predictability in the fiscal relationship between the state and local units of government:

- Providing direct property tax relief through the Property Tax Refund and Renters Credit programs
- Preserving the integrity of the Fiscal Disparities Program by ensuring revenue is not diverted from the pool for one-off legislative priorities
- Supporting more frequent review of the Local Government Aid (LGA) program in recognition of the growing financial needs of cities in the state, including those who currently do not receive LGA