



Summer Caucuses with State Lawmakers City Caucus Notes

Wednesday, August 4, 2021

Call to Order/Welcome/Attendance – The City Caucus met virtually on Wednesday, August 4, 2021, at 8:30 a.m. via GoToMeeting. Michael Beazley, administrator for the City of Oregon and caucus facilitator, called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone present.

TMACOG members in attendance included:

- Cecelia Adams, Council Member At-Large, City of Toledo
- Kevin Aller, Director of Public Safety/Service, City of Sylvania
- Mike Aspacher, Mayor, City of Bowling Green and Vice Chair, TMACOG
- Michael Beazley, Administrator, City of Oregon
- Meghan Gallagher, Regional Business Development Coordinator & Account Manager, Ohio Turnpike and Infrastructure Commission
- Adam Greenslade, Mayor, Village of Green Springs and Dir. of Govt. Affairs & MarCom, Ohio Turnpike and Infrastructure Commission
- Sarah Helbig, Executive Director of Marketing, Jones & Henry Engineers, Ltd.
- Donna Helle, Assistant Finance Director, City of Maumee
- David Hower, Village Administrator, Village of Elmore
- Thomas Mackin, Chief Administrative and Legal Officer, Lucas Metropolitan Housing Authority (LMHA) and Mayor, City of Perrysburg
- Edward Moore, Director of Public Utilities, City of Toledo
- Dean Niese, CEO, Mannik & Smith Group, Inc.
- Paul Rasmusson, Director of Public Service, City of Toledo
- Todd Ritzler, SVP, Government Relationship Manager, Huntington Bank
- Angie Ruiz, Council Member, 3rd Ward, City of Fremont
- Sean Smith, Development and Equity Officer, Toledo Area Regional Transit Authority (TARTA)
- Mark Stahl, Commissioner, Ottawa County and Chair, TMACOG
- Craig Stough, Mayor, City of Sylvania

Non-TMACOG members in attendance included:

- Lori Brodie, Northwest Regional Liaison, Office of Ohio State Auditor, Keith Faber
- Ohio Rep. Gary Click, 88th District
- Ohio Rep. Paula Hicks-Hudson, 44th District
- Erica Krause, Northwest Ohio Regional Representative, Office of U.S. Senator Sherrod Brown
- Christa Luttmann, Northwest Regional Liaison, Office of Ohio Governor Mike DeWine
- Tim Porter, Chair, Northwest Ohio Passenger Rail Association and Chair, TMACOG Passenger Rail Committee
- Ohio Rep. Mike Sheehy, 46th District

- Jason Vance, Village Administrator, Village of Paulding

TMACOG Staff in attendance included:

- Jennifer Allen, Executive Assistant
- Alex Aspacher, Public Information Specialist
- Marissa Bechstein, Transportation Planner
- William Best, Vice President of Finance and Administration
- Tim Brown, President
- David Gedeon, Vice President of Transportation
- Kari Gerwin, Director of Water Quality Planning
- Sara Guiher, Water Quality Planner
- Gilda Mitchell, Director of Membership and Outreach
- Nate Reiter, Accountant
- Roger Streiffert, Transportation Planner
- Mike Tippet, Director of Communications

Overview of Meeting – Discussion of Issues - The following topics were discussed by the caucus:

- **COVID-19 impacts to cities and ongoing strategies**
 - Most cities are fully open and have no restrictions. There is no push to require employees to be vaccinated, and they are not expecting local mandates or restrictions. Income taxes fell about 2 to 9 percent. The City of Oregon saw its sales tax come in flat and had the biggest hit overall. They were 20 percent down because of how heavily they rely on the refineries.
- **Local government funding and American Rescue Plan (ARP) funding**
 - Caucus members were reminded to make sure they are utilizing their law directors to ensure they are following the guidelines to apply for these funds. Also, work with the state auditor's office and ask questions about how they can utilize the funds. Erica Krause from Senator Brown's office will share a FAQ information sheet that clarifies how this money can be spent.
- **Importance of city income tax and the potential changes by Ohio legislators**
 - More people are still working from home and will continue to work from home. This causes issues with income tax collections. Cities that are host to many offices may see issues collecting income taxes in the future. Costs will not go down for cities because infrastructure will still need to be maintained even if people work from home. The City of Sylvania will not be hurt by this change but will potentially benefit from it. The City of Oregon might not benefit or be negatively impacted by these changes. The City of Maumee currently does not have an accurate number of how many people will be working from home. The City of Bowling Green will be negatively impacted by more people working from home. Bowling Green's major employers' employees do not live within the city. Municipal income tax withholding refund is one of the most concerning issues. Bowling Green could be required to refund \$2-3 million if the provision for refunds goes through. The City of Perrysburg is also dealing with the potential income tax issues. Many buildings in Perrysburg are going to stay empty.

- **Federal infrastructure funding**

- The state is providing water and sewer dollars for cities up to \$5 million and a scoring system has been released. Cities are advised to investigate how they can apply for this money. The City of Oregon has identified some projects. The City of Toledo has started looking at potential projects. They are looking at a second crossing for sewage under the Maumee River. The U.S. Economic Development Administration (USEDA) also has grant opportunities for large dollar amounts. They are looking for transformative regional projects. Cities that have projects ready and engineering complete are going to be in the best position to receive these dollars. The City of Toledo is actively pursuing a project with the EDA through the Northwest Water and Sewer District. The City of Oregon is also actively pursuing projects for these funding sources. Erica Krause informed the group that Senator Brown would be available to provide a letter of support. Their office can send the letter directly to the federal agency if there is a short timeline for the grant application. Another category of available funding is TMACOG Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) funding. TIP solicitation just closed and TMACOG had about \$30 million to allocate, \$3.4 million were COVID relief funds that must be obligated by 2024. Another round will occur next year, and TMACOG is hoping that some more money will be available through the federal infrastructure package. Erica Krause informed caucus attendees that the senate will stay in session until they get the bill over the last few hurdles. The Bridge Investment Act legislation was included in the package. Another provision that was secured was the Buy America, Build America Provision, which would require more money to be spent on American-made materials. Another piece is the budget reconciliation package, which includes additional infrastructure spending.

- **Policing issues**

- Many cities are having issues hiring and recruiting police officers. The City of Oregon is trying to keep wages higher to attract individuals. The City of Perrysburg has had a lot of police officers that retired, but they have been hiring new people to fill those roles. Perrysburg is having issues with positions that require licenses like wastewater and water administrators because they cannot find people to apply for those positions with the appropriate certifications. Waterville and Whitehouse passed a levy that gave them more money to hire full-time people, but the candidate pool for smaller cities is very small for police and fire. Caucus members discussed the job market and the need for roles in the region. One solution is to have presentations from specialized positions at local middle schools and high schools, so students are aware of their options. The City of Oregon will offer to pay their employees to get the required licenses and certifications. The City of Fremont also has a shortage of police officers and firefighters. The City of Sylvania said they are looking for a pool of individuals that fit the community. They have adjusted requirements; therefore, they do not require a certification to be hired as a police officer. However, they will pay employees to receive those certifications if they commit to 3 years with the city.

- **Roundtable discussion**

- The City of Fremont will be looking to pursue a city income tax for 5 years which will be used for roads and streets. The City of Toledo Regional Water Commission is going well. One concern is that the people who worked to develop this system are

going to be moving on, so now they are focused on talent recruitment. They are putting new employees through operator training, so they can develop the talent.

- Rep. Paula Hicks-Hudson spoke to the caucus about the changes and needs going forward. There will be some adjustments to cities' income tax revenues. Cities must talk to legislators about this impact and discuss how the issues can affect all other issues like hiring and infrastructure. She provided a challenge to TMACOG to bring people together as a common interest to help representatives advocate for the region in Columbus.
- Rep. Mike Sheehy understands the importance of the city income tax and will continue to advocate for this region.

What legislative action might be helpful?

- Not discussed

Other Business/Next Steps

- Reach out to state legislators and utilize TMACOG and the resources they provide.

Adjourn – There was no further business. Mike Beazley adjourned the meeting at 10 a.m.