

Fredrikson and Byron Legislative Update



MAT/MATIT STATE LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

April 14, 2021

The past 10 days have been a virtual whirlwind at the State Capital as omnibus finance bills were published by various committee chairs early last week and quickly acted upon to meet the Third Committee Deadline, which was last Friday, April 9.

As a reminder, a committee omnibus finance bill is a collection of dozens of smaller finance (and some policy) bills that have been heard and determined by the committee chair to be included in the larger legislation. Once the proposed legislation is posted on-line, in some cases the public has a day (possibly two or three) to analyze, testify, lobby and attempt to amend the proposed omnibus bills.

Each of those steps took place last week at the same time in more than 30 committees. So quite the pressure cooker, but it's not over yet!

As I type, these omnibus bills are quickly being cycled through the tax committees, the Senate Finance Committee and the House Ways and Means Committee. Along the way, additional amendments are being considered to these omnibus bills; which require sharp eyes to catch any possible impact on townships. After all that, these omnibus bills then head for the House and Senate floor in the next few days (some are already on their way), where they will be voted on over the next two weeks.

On matters related to MAT/MATIT, last week was spent participating in District 4 and 5 meetings and on the monitoring of all those omnibus finance bills that could impact townships. The key issues are: transportation, annexation, workers' compensation, taxes, broadband, volunteer drivers, elections, general government services, etc. But it is transportation that is our highest priority at this point.

MAT needs to increase its grassroots advocacy on MAT's top priority, transportation funding. As of the last report, only 144 town officials recently contacted legislators across the state. However, **we still need dozens more township officers to contact their legislators in every Senate District!**

If you have any further questions about grassroots advocacy or other issues listed below, feel free to contact Jeff Krueger.

Last Week's MAT Highlights:

- As mentioned above, all of last was spent week monitoring omnibus finance bills in the following House and Senate committees:
 - Agriculture
 - Commerce
 - Workforce Development/Jobs
 - Environment
 - Transportation
 - State Government
 - Labor.

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- As part of that monitoring of omnibus finance bills, MAT also weighed in with written testimony on the transportation omnibus finance bills and the Senate Agriculture Omnibus Finance Bill.
- District 4 and 5 meetings were virtually held and well attended by area legislators.

This Week's MAT Highlights:

- As of today, there is continued monitoring of the omnibus finance bills as they travel through the tax committees, the Senate Finance Committee and the House Ways and Means Committee; on their way to the House and Senate floors.
- A positive meeting with Sen. Frentz on annexation issues. He has agreed to assist us in learning more about the annexation issues and helping facilitate productive conversations with the cities' advocacy organizations and MAT during this summer.

KEY MAT ISSUES

Transportation

- House Omnibus Finance Bill - The House has decided to go with the auto parts sales tax and scale up the township funding over the next four years. So nearly \$3 million for FY22, \$8+ million for FY23, then \$10+ million for FY24 and another \$10+ million for FY25.
- Senate Omnibus Finance Bill – The Senate will also dedicate auto parts sales tax to the Town Road and Bridge accounts, but the Senate bill allocates \$9 million a year immediately. Plus, the Senate bill allocates one-time funding in FY22 of \$6.15 million and \$5.75 million in FY23. When you combine that with the \$9 million per year of dedicated funding, townships could be seeing \$15+ million in FY22 and \$14+ million in FY23. Now we're starting to get close to the magic number of \$20 million per year to maintain our roads!
- At this point in the legislative session, **a large-scale MAT VoterVoice effort is required ASAP by all town officials to contact their legislators and push for a \$20 million annual township road funding increase.**

Agriculture

MAT submitted a letter of support to the House and Senate agriculture committees for the Governor's Noxious Weed Management Program budget recommendations. Both the Senate and House omnibus finance bills have included full funding of \$900 million over two years.

Broadband

- House - \$30 million for the border-to-border broadband account with no policy changes.
- Senate - \$30 million in the first year, \$10 million in the second year. Specifies \$10 million of the first year money is exclusively for unserved areas and able to go up to 55% state funds (normally 50%), if the local government also contributes to a project. Adds fixed wireless as eligible projects. Specifies that \$80 million of federal COVID funds should be spent on broadband infrastructure.

Volunteer Driver Legislation

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- HF586 (Volunteer drivers receiving funding from public transit participation program clarified as not for hire) was heard and passed out of the House Commerce Committee and the House Transportation Committee last month. Even though the bill – technically – did not make Second Committee Deadline in the Senate, it was still included in the House Commerce Omnibus Finance Bill.
- SF1766, which allows volunteer drivers to get an income tax subtraction for mileage reimbursement, had a positive hearing in the Senate Tax Committee. At this point, we are awaiting the Senate Omnibus Tax Bill and hope that it will be included.

Government Data Practices Act

Sen. Limmer introduced legislation last week

(<https://www.revisor.mn.gov/bills/bill.php?b=senate&f=SF2329&ssn=0&y=2021>) to require all elements of the Government Data Practice Act to apply to townships. That is very bad on many accounts for townships.

Fortunately, in connecting with his staff, Sen. Limmer does not intend to act on this bill this legislative session.