

CITY OF TACOMA 2021 FEDERAL PRIORITIES

GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Responding to the COVID-19 Pandemic as Partners

The City of Tacoma has implemented several successful COVID-19 response programs, including small business assistance, rental assistance, and non-congregate sheltering options for individuals experiencing homelessness. The City must still attend to its essential functions, and is anticipating a revenue shortfall of approximately \$40 million in the 2021-2022 biennium. We urge Congress to pass a fifth stimulus package that **provides additional relief for State and local governments, including the City, as well as support for constituents, workers, businesses, and partners in the community.** It ought to include:

- Direct aid for cities with populations under 500,000 residents, like Tacoma;
- Ability to use federal dollars to cover expenses and revenue losses; and
- Resources to address income, housing, food insecurity of residents and financial distress of small businesses, nonprofits, and venues.

Together, We Will Change—Systems Transformation

The City hopes to work together in partnership with federal policy makers to advance reforms that address the disparate impacts of systems and institutions on communities of color. As part of this, the City calls on Congress to advance transformation policies with regard to policing and the criminal justice system, economic security, immigration, housing, climate justice, and infrastructure to better support communities that historically have not been well-served by existing systems and policies. The City finds the following reforms of great importance:

Policing and Criminal Justice Transformation

Tacoma is undertaking an effort to analyze our existing policies in the Police Department and we are working to implement new initiatives and policies at the local level. We support comprehensive police reform legislation at the federal level that can align with our efforts. **The City encourages Congress to continue discussion on legislation such as the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act and the Just and Unifying Solutions to Invigorate Communities Everywhere (JUSTICE) Act.**

The City also supports several other issue-specific bills that seek **to implement sentencing reform and provide financial incentives for states and cities to implement independent investigations and body-worn camera programs**, among other efforts:

- Justice Safety Valve Act
- Police Training and Independent Review Act
- Reverse Mass Incarceration Act
- Next Step Act
- Police Creating Accountability by Making Effective Recording Available (CAMERA) Act

Economic Security

Community members are asking leaders to not only address the violence of police brutality, but also the violence of poverty and the violence of a lack of opportunity. **Mayor Woodards joined Mayors for a Guaranteed Income (MGI), a network of mayors who are studying or piloting guaranteed income (GI) projects in their communities.** The City supports the priorities of this network, including additional Economic Impact Payments (EIPs), also known as the \$1,200 stimulus checks, and the expansion and modernization of the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC).

We also support the **Commission to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African-Americans Act**, to establish a commission to study and recommend reparation proposals in a report to Congress and examine federal and state policies that contribute to white supremacy.

The City supports the **Minority Business Resiliency Act**, codifying the Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA), which currently operates under the authority of an Executive Order, into law and expand the reach of the agency by creating regional MBDA offices, strengthening its grant-making capacity and increasing its coordination with other federal agencies. The Tacoma MBDA has helped secure tens of millions in contracts and financial transactions for Washington state businesses and has helped create hundreds of jobs.

Human Dignity and Public Safety: Immigration Reform

The City shares concerns expressed by the Tacoma community for the health, safety, and welfare of detainees held in the Northwest ICE Processing Center, a privately owned and operated immigration detention facility. The City finds that Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)'s current operations are dehumanizing and **implores the federal government to replace it with an anti-racist agency that will humanely and equitably implement immigration laws and eradicate human trafficking.** To that end, we support legislation that would **end the use of privately-operated prisons and instead utilize available alternatives to immigration detention.** The City supports the **Dignity for Detained Immigrants Act**, which will ensure that all immigrants receive individualized and fair bond hearings by ending the use of mandatory detention of certain immigrants and requiring the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to establish probable cause of removability in 48 hours. Further, we support the **Federal Immigrant Release for Safety and Security Together (FIRST) Act**, which is crucial to ensuring the health and safety of undocumented individuals during a National Emergency related to a communicable disease. The City calls for the immediate release of individuals in ICE custody for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Human Dignity and Public Safety: Gun Violence

Nearly 38,000 Americans die from gun-related injuries in the United States every year. Finding and declaring that gun violence directly affects residents, the Tacoma City Council adopted a Firearms and Ammunition Tax in 2019. The City joins the U.S. Conference of Mayors and the National League of Cities in urging the President to **advance critical legislation to reduce gun violence and promote public safety.** The City supports the **Bipartisan Background Checks Act** and the **Enhanced Background Checks Act**, to require and enhance background checks, as passed by the U.S. House of Representatives.

Affordable Housing and Homelessness

Cities face a crisis of homelessness and lack of affordable housing. This crisis is overwhelming at the intersection of mental health, substance use disorder and homelessness. Effective local responses require multi-sector partnerships and a strong federal partner. The City joins the U.S. Conference of Mayors and National League of Cities in calling on Congress and the Administration to **ensure sufficient**

federal funding streams are in place, federal funds are appropriated directly to the local level and programs reliable for decades such as HOME, CDBG and McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance grants that serve the most vulnerable populations are preserved. Tacoma has invested these program dollars wisely and will continue to draw on their support to advance its priority initiatives such as the *Affordable Housing Action Strategy*, with the goal of creating 6,000 new units of attainable housing by the year 2028.

The City supports the **Housing Fairness Act to assess prevalence of housing discrimination and create a grant program for organizations to study the causes and effects of such discrimination.** We seek flexibility in federal funding to be able to deploy those resources toward communities in Tacoma that need them the most so that we may effectively address housing disparities.

The City opposes recent actions by the Department of Housing and Urban Development revising the Fair Housing Act “disparate impact” standard that raised the burden of proof for plaintiffs and the rule that terminates the Obama Administration’s Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing regulation.

Climate Justice

Tacoma is among 438 cities representing 70 million Americans that continue to honor and uphold the commitments to the goals enshrined in the Paris Agreement, despite President Trump’s 2017 withdrawal. The City supports the **Climate Action Now Act**, which would require the President to develop a plan for the U.S. to meet its contribution under the Paris Agreement on climate change. We also support the **Environmental Justice for All Act** to empower community voices in federal decision making under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and ensure Tribal representation.

Infrastructure

Tacoma voters have approved initiatives to invest in local streets and transit, but the magnitude of some projects such as the \$180 million replacement of the 90-year old Puyallup River Bridge cannot be achieved through local and State funds alone. The City joins the U.S. Conference of Mayors and National League of Cities in declaring that America's infrastructure problems cannot wait and calls on Congress and the Administration to **find adequate, reliable, and sustainable long-term funding for a vibrant web of connected transportation options, including public transit**, that reflect local needs and priorities.

Access to high-speed broadband service in every community is essential to our ability to provide quality education, create more jobs, and increase small business growth. Local governments are central players in ensuring broadband connection to homes and businesses is achieved. Tacoma calls on the Federal Communications Commission and Congress to **preserve local government authority to manage their rights-of-way to ensure the siting of cell towers and small cells is safe and appropriate.** Tacoma supports the **Accelerating Wireless Broadband Development by Empowering Local Communities Act of 2019 to overturn the FCC regulations limiting the ability of local governments to regulate the deployment of 5G wireless infrastructure.**

In October of 2020, Tacoma was awarded a \$20 million Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA) loan to modernize the electrical distribution system at our primary wastewater treatment plan. **The City supports appropriations to fully fund the WIFIA.**

TACOMA PUBLIC UTILITIES

TPU-Wide

Infrastructure financing tools: TPU supports legislation that promotes the availability of tax-exempt municipal bonds and will support proposals that revoke changes made in 2017 relating to advance refunding. TPU also supports restoring Build America Bond payments back to their originally-enacted levels.

TPU supports programs to assist lower-income residents: TPU supports additional funding for programs that provide assistance to lower-income residents.

TPU Power

Support proposals to improve BPA's competitiveness: TPU will continue to support federal proposals to improve BPA's cost competitiveness. Specific examples include renegotiating the power provisions of the Columbia River Treaty and achieving more accurate allocations of Federal Columbia River Power System (FCRPS) costs.

Carbon reduction policies: TPU will actively engage in and seek to support proposals that decarbonize the economy at reasonable costs to customers and that appropriately acknowledge and credit hydropower as a carbon-free generating resource.

Support investment in electric transportation infrastructure and programs that advance the development of clean fuels: TPU will support additional funding for electric transportation infrastructure and programs that advance the development and production of clean fuels.

Provide funding for the Hydropower Incentive Program: Tacoma Power continues to support federal appropriations for the Department of Energy's Hydropower Incentive Program. The program provides payments to hydropower utilities, including Tacoma Power, for hydroelectric production added to an existing dam or conduit.

Support legislation to maintain municipal utility control over poles and pole attachment rate setting: TPU supports legislation that would ensure that municipally-owned utilities maintain their historic authority to safely manage pole attachments on utility poles.

TPU Water

Support implementation of the Howard Hanson Dam – Additional Water Storage Project: Tacoma Water continues to support federal authorization, appropriations, and actions

necessary to complete the Howard Hanson Dam – Additional Water Storage Project. Any federal action must respect federal/non-federal cost share agreements already in place. TPU believes Howard Hanson Dam fish passage and the Additional Water Storage Project are critical to salmon and orca recovery as a construction-ready project with broad impact.

Support funding of the Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA): Tacoma Water is supportive of appropriations to fully fund the Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA).

Support funding of the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund: Tacoma Water supports adequate appropriations for the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund.

TPU Rail

Support permanent extension of the Railroad Track Maintenance Credit: Tacoma Rail supports permanent extension of the Railroad Track Maintenance Credit – or “45G” tax credit. Tacoma Rail receives about \$250,000 in annual revenues from the 45G tax credit. Those funds have been used for a number of safety upgrades as well as to comply with unfunded federal requirements mandated by the 2008 Rail Safety Act.

Establish capital grant program for short line railroads: Tacoma Rail seeks to work with Congress to establish a short line specific freight railroad state-of-good-repair program as part of the federal freight/rail title and other federal programs. Specifically, establishment of a competitive capital grant program for short line regional railroad infrastructure improvement projects.