

2019 City of Tacoma State Legislative Agenda

Fiscal:

- Making it easier for business to register and pay taxes is a goal of both the State and those cities that impose licenses and taxes on business. The City seeks authorization for the File Local tax and license system to be allowed to bring other cities onboard as desired. (*General Fund revenue*)
- Public property is exempt from property tax, but occupying or using publicly owned real estate may be subject to leasehold excise taxes. The Tacoma Dome leases space to food and craft vendors, arts organizations, ticket vendors and concessionaires that must currently pay 12.84% of their rent to the State while competing public venues have been exempted. The City seeks exemption from the leasehold tax for the Tacoma Dome. (*General Fund Revenue*)
- The Legislature urgently needs to address remaining issues with its recent actions to significantly increase state funding for K-12 education. Specifically, the Tacoma School District was seriously harmed by funding formula changes and the City supports the district in seeking authorization to allow it to collect the full amount of revenue approved by the citizens of Tacoma in 2018. (*Pre K & K-12 Education*)

Neighborhoods:

- Affordable housing provides medium and long term housing solutions to individuals and families at risk of homelessness. The City will seek tools that incentivize affordable housing and programs to prevent homelessness and address the needs of those who become homeless. These may include, but are not be limited to, initiatives to provide funding for local housing trust funds, modification of real estate excise taxes, or other means to direct new revenue to enhance construction of affordable housing. Many local government agencies are dealing with the same issues concerning homelessness as Tacoma. The City will look for ways to maximize legislative success by working collaboratively with these agencies wherever practicable. (*Housing, Homeless*)
- The City is endeavoring to improve services for homeless youth in Tacoma and plans to establish a youth drop in shelter. The City seeks capital budget funds for this project. (*Children & Families, Homeless*)
- The State is a major property owner in Tacoma. Portions of State highways are used for encampments and also become blighted through discarded refuse. Tagging and

other graffiti is also a problem on State bridges and other transportation infrastructure. The City seeks legislation or budget authorization providing direction and increased funding for the Department of Transportation to work with local governments in rapid responses to address these issues. (*Highway planting & maintenance, Graffiti & encampment removal*)

Transportation:

- In Tacoma and throughout Washington there are heavily used aging local bridges that need significant repair or replacement. The Puyallup River Bridge carried over 30,000 cars per day even with load limits. The City is currently replacing two segments of the bridge. The remaining six segments will require \$100 million more. Existing grant programs are inadequate to provide this level of funding. The City seeks new tools, which may include tolling, to help preserve existing transportation infrastructure. (*Regional Transportation, Local Transportation Revenue*)
- The State has initiated a study of the regulations of transportation network companies (TNC). The City has participated in this endeavor. The City seeks some measure of uniformity to regulation of this business but will oppose preemption, limits on its ability to license and tax, or its authority to adopt other regulations as needed. (*Right of Way, General Fund Revenue*)
- Passenger only ferries are increasingly viewed as important options for travel in the congested Puget Sound area and for providing resiliency for our transportation infrastructure. The City will seek State funding of a comprehensive study of the cost and ridership of potential routes in the region and options for governance of such systems. (*Ferry Service, Regional Transportation*)

2019 City of Tacoma Federal Legislative Agenda

Affordable Housing and Homelessness

The City **opposes elimination of HOME and CDBG that serve the most vulnerable populations.** Tacoma has invested these programs wisely in our community and will continue to draw on their support to help individuals, families and neighborhoods to gain stability. As examples, Tacoma adopted the *Affordable Housing Action Strategy (AHAS)* to safeguard and increase the number of affordable, available, and accessible housing units throughout the city over the next 10 years. The City adopted a Temporary Emergency Aid and Shelter Plan in 2017 that was originally funded only through 2018 but must be extended through 2019.

Human Dignity and Safety

It is a priority of the City to make Tacoma a "Welcoming City" and to cultivate an environment supportive of immigrants and refugees. The City calls on the federal government to **enact comprehensive immigration reform** including creating a pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants, refugees and permanently addressing the legal status of undocumented students including DREAMERS and DACA.

The Northwest Detention Center in Tacoma is a privately-owned detention facility that operates under contract with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security Immigration & Customs Enforcement to house non-U.S. citizens who are apprehended and determined to need custodial supervision. The City urges its Congressional delegates to continue to pursue legislation that would **end the use of privately-operated prisons and increase the use of available alternatives to immigration detention.** The City applauds the leadership in Washington's congressional delegation who introduced the *Dignity for Detained Immigrants Act* that would restore dignity and justice to the broken detention system.

The City calls on Congress to pass legislation to address mental health to **support local communities to improve mental health** and especially to lend critical support to families and youth. Tacoma youth report lower rates of mental wellness than statewide counterparts. Living in poverty adds to the risk of mental health disorders; one in four children in Tacoma are living in poverty. Mental illness is the most commonly reported disability affecting the city's homeless population.

The City urges Congress to **provide funding to respond to the national opioid epidemic** and expand access to treatment. Deaths tied to opioid overdoses in Pierce County occurred at a rate of 10.2 deaths per 100,000 people; a rate higher than the statewide average of 9.8. In 2018, Tacoma was one of six cities from across the country chosen to participate in the National League of Cities Mayors' Institute on Opioids and the only city west of the Mississippi to receive an invitation.

Opportunities for Youth

Tacoma cherishes its youth; providing services to them is a priority. The Mayor's Youth Engagement Task Force will help the City establish its very first Youth Commission and improve upon existing youth-focused programs. The City of Tacoma joins the U.S. Conference of Mayors and the National League of Cities in calling on Congress to reinstate federal funding to provide resources to communities to help **support robust partnerships that create work-based learning opportunities and ensure local communities have sufficient resources to support families, and children and youth from ages zero to 18 years.**

Economic Development and Infrastructure

Tacoma citizens have approved initiatives to invest in local streets and transit, but the magnitude of some projects such as replacement of the 90-year old Puyallup River Bridge or the Puget Sound Gateway Project cannot be achieved through local and State funds alone. The City calls on Congress and the Administration to **find adequate, reliable, and sustainable long-term funding for a vibrant web of connected transportation options** 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 communities must have the option to own and operate public broadband networks. Local governments are central players in ensuring broadband connection to homes and businesses is achieved. The City 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.**

Environment

At the Center for Urban Waters in Tacoma, world class laboratories are creating, evaluating, and applying the best possible scientific and engineering clean water technologies to protect and restore Puget Sound and to lead development of solutions for all urban coastal communities. The City applauds its representatives in Congress for their leadership in introducing legislation that would protect the water quality of Puget Sound and supports legislation that would **acknowledge and build upon innovative storm water work such as that being done at the Center for Urban Waters.**

In response to President Trump's 2017 withdrawal from the Paris Climate Agreement, Tacoma became among 407 cities representing 70 million Americans, that **continue to honor and uphold the commitments to the goals enshrined in the Paris Agreement.** These cities will continue to lead by increasing investments in renewable energy and energy efficiency, buying and creating more demand for electric cars and trucks, increasing efforts to cut greenhouse gas emissions, creating a clean energy economy, and standing for environmental justice and building and strengthening relationships around the world to protect the planet from devastating climate risks.

DRAFT – Presented to PUB on 11.14.18
Tacoma Public Utilities 2019 Legislative Agenda

TPU-Wide – Federal

- **Protecting/amending tax exempt financing:** TPU supports legislation that promotes the availability of tax-exempt municipal bonds. TPU will support proposals that revoke recent changes relating to the advanced refunding of bonds. Tax exempt municipal bonds keep costs low for customers.

Tacoma Power – Federal

- **Increase funding for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program:** Tacoma Power continues to support federal appropriations for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP).
- **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 that was added to an existing dam or conduit.
- **Support certain improvements to federal hydroelectric relicensing statutes:** Tacoma Power supports efficiencies and streamlining of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) hydropower licensing and relicensing policies, similar to bipartisan proposals put forward by Sen. Maria Cantwell and Sen. Lisa Murkowski in the 115th Congress.

Tacoma Water – Federal

- **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.
- **Support full 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 for the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund:** Tacoma Water supports adequate appropriations for the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund.

Tacoma Rail – Federal

- **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.

Tacoma Power -- State

- **Carbon reduction policies:** Washington lawmakers have indicated that priorities for 2019 will include several proposals aimed at decarbonizing Washington State’s economy. TPU will actively engage in and seek to support proposals that decarbonize the economy at reasonable costs to customers.
- **Equitable Access to Solar:** Many individuals in our state, particularly lower-income residents, do not have access to solar energy. “Community Solar” provides the most equitable access to solar as it removes many physical and financial barriers for customers. TPU will seek to create a state community solar incentive program to expand access to low-income customers.
- **Clear Authority for COUs to Support Electrification:** The transportation sector generates the largest share of greenhouse gas emissions in the City of Tacoma and Washington State. TPU supports state policies that address electrifying the transportation sector and will seek clear legislative authority for consumer-owned-utilities (COUs) to offer incentive programs in electrification of transportation for their customers.

Tacoma Water – State

- **Support the Public Works Trust Fund:** More than 6.2 million Washington State residents, 85 percent of the state's population, get their drinking water from public water systems. Nationally, \$4.8 trillion needs to be invested over the next 20 years to keep up with aging water infrastructure. The Public Works Trust Fund (PWTF) is a crucial funding program for many communities around our state providing low interest loans to help maintain vital public infrastructure. TPU supports public water systems and city partners in their request to fully restore funding to the PWTF:

Tacoma Rail – State

- **State Rail Grant and Loan Programs:** The State of Washington administers both a grant program and a loan program designed to support freight rail capital needs. Tacoma Rail has applied for three projects under the Freight Rail Investment Bank and Freight

Rail Assistance Program. If awarded, the funds would be used to update aging track infrastructure to ensure safety and to maintain highly reliable service.