

SEMCOG 2025-2026 Legislative Policy Platform Task Force**Meeting Summary**

Thursday, July 17, 2024

10 a.m.-12-Noon

SEMCOG Offices

1001 Woodward Ave., Ste. 1400

Detroit, MI 48226

Chairperson: Frank Viviano, Supervisor, Macomb Township

Vice-Chairperson: Robert McCraight, Mayor, City of Romulus

A. Welcome and Introductions*Frank Viviano, Supervisor, Macomb Township**Robert McCraight, Mayor, City of Romulus*

Mr. Viviano called the meeting to order. Mr. Viviano and Mr. McCraight introduced themselves and then asked task force members, SEMCOG staff, and others present to introduce themselves.

B. Overview of the Task Force Objectives and Timeline*Frank Viviano, Supervisor, Macomb Township**Robert McCraight, Mayor, City of Romulus*

Mr. Viviano reviewed the charge of the task force, emphasizing that the policies to be discussed and considered by the task force should be within SEMCOG's issue areas of transportation, environment, community and economic development, and education. Mr. Viviano then reviewed the task force timeline, providing overviews of the proposed agendas for each of the task force's three meetings.

C. How SEMCOG advocates for Southeast Michigan in Lansing and Washington*Michael Spence, SEMCOG Government Affairs Administrator*

Mr. Spence reviewed SEMCOG's approach to legislative advocacy, discussed the importance of taking a long-term approach to legislative "wins" and highlighted input being gathered from SEMCOG members to inform the task force's future policy discussions.

D. SEMCOG's Issue Areas and Current Regional Trends*Kevin Vettrano, SEMCOG Planning Director*

Mr. Vettrano provided an overview of SEMCOG's primary planning areas and regional trends on the topics of equity, parks and recreation, mobility and electric vehicles, office and retail space needs as it impacts land use and the economy, climate and flood resiliency, and transportation safety.

E. Introduction to Federal and State Legislative Issues*Federal: Andy Buczek and Mary Beth McGowan, Dykema Government Policy Advisors**State: Mike Compagnoni, Midwest Strategy Group*

Mr. Compagnoni introduced the Midwest Strategy Group team engaged with SEMCOG and provided insights on the 2024 midterm election and how that is likely to impact state legislative activity through the 2024 lame duck session. Mr. Compagnoni discussed the impacts that a shifting balance of power in the legislature may have on SEMCOG's issue areas.

Mr. Buczek and Ms. McGowan introduced the Dykema lobbying team, and shared their insights on the 2024 midterm election and how that is likely to impact Congressional activity through the end of the year, and how varying election results will impact SEMCOG's legislative priorities moving forward.

F. Breakout Discussions on SEMCOG's Legislative Policy Areas

Frank Viviano, Supervisor, Macomb Township

Robert McCraight, Mayor, City of Romulus

Mr. Viviano explained the breakout format to task force members, stating that the four breakout groups will spend 10 minutes each, discussing each of SEMCOG's issue areas: Infrastructure; Communities; Economy and Workforce; and Natural Assets.

Comments from the task force included:

Infrastructure

- Road condition for surface streets (nonfreeway/residential); road quality > road expansion
- Evaluate road funding, particularly as the transition to EVs continues
- Act 51 underfunds all of Southeast Michigan, needs to be revisited
- Stormwater management and Flooding resources are needed; state law needs to enable stormwater utilities; encourage elimination of impervious surfaces in new development
- Soft response rate when soliciting bids for infrastructure projects
- Water affordability
- Port infrastructure needs to be built out
- Use waterfronts for more than just beauty
- Reduce truck emissions by using waterways for freight
- Inconsistency in how road condition ratings are used to allocate funds to communities
- Walkability, complete streets, and public transit are priorities
- More bus stops at campuses, and bus routes to more communities that don't currently have transit access
- Challenges with community liability for sidewalks acts as a disincentive to construct new sidewalks
- Support infrastructure for electric vehicles and other sustainable energy sources
- Ensure that all users of the public rights-of-way pay royalties to offset costs of maintaining the right-of-way.
- Increased access to transit and travel modes for residents
- Do not exempt EV charging stations from property taxes in order to capture those revenues as charging stations become commonplace
- Mandate safety standards around EV infrastructure; including parking structure weight capacity for heavy EV batteries, fire suppression, etc.
- Address issues with public utility reliability (particularly the electric power grid)
- Encourage a common platform for infrastructure data collection, mapping, etc.

- Infrastructure to support more remote work/school
- Support vehicle automation and other emerging technologies in the auto industry
- Provide incentives to encourage communities to collect asset management data
- Increase flexibility of funding from state and federal partners
- Protect local governments from liabilities associated with extreme weather

Communities

- Inequities in Act 51 Infrastructure Funding create general fund challenges for local governments
- Resources are needed to address aging facilities and municipal buildings, including asbestos abatement and HVAC; these issues exacerbate workforce challenges, especially when facilities are needed for female public safety staff
- Increase state revenue sharing and ensure flexibility in the use of state funds
- Enable local options for things like “luxury taxes” on alcoholic beverages within specific districts in a community (ex. Entertainment District), hotel/motel taxes, etc.
- Address the issues created by Headlee/Proposal A, especially in a local government finance system so reliant on property tax revenues; educate lawmakers on the impacts of Headlee
- Encourage state and local building codes to support multi-family housing and density
- CDBG funding seems to be decreasing, despite rhetoric suggesting otherwise; this funding is needed to address blight and support housing affordability and maintenance costs for the aging population and those on a fixed income to support aging in place
- Protect local governments from unfunded mandates
- Maintaining tax exempt status for municipal bonds
- Establish a revenue sharing trust fund for local governments
- 13,000 households in Oakland County are facing housing foreclosures because of water bills and back taxes; foreclosure prevention, especially for seniors and long-term residents
- Consider removing policy regarding offering incentives that encourage communities to collaborate
- Allow for \$1 fee on CPL licenses to fund gun buy-back programs
- Unfairness of hotel taxes, based on the size of the local community
- Local control over fireworks ordinances
- Support policies that help keep people in their homes by “winding down” taxes based on fixed incomes
- Mandate “truth in banking” education and transparent disclosure for homebuyers related to Headlee/Prop A “pop ups” on first year tax bills
- Address challenges with Act 51 funding for regional transport, which can be diverted from local and micro-transit (through Municipal Credits), to larger transit agencies
- Ensure that local governments are made whole by tax exemptions (i.e. disabled veterans property tax exemption)
- Broader oversight needed on the siting of landfills, to consider impacts on neighboring communities
- Equitable funding where the distribution of state/federal funds takes into consideration population (particularly for larger townships)

Economy and Workforce

- Policy should recognize the links between development/education/workforce/transit

- Increase awareness and appeal of public sector careers
- Increase awareness for more post-high school careers
- Increase awareness that college plus skilled trades training can lead to career stability and sustainability
- Ensure that school counselors have experience or knowledge of skilled trades
- Policies should attract climate migrants
- Ensure free/reduced meal access in schools
- Support community recreation centers as placemaking
- Increase awareness of tax credits available to small business
- Support transit and mobility to get people to jobs and training opportunities
- Remove barriers to work by offering childcare, retraining for new jobs and technology, and incentivizing childcare centers to expand
- Increase Infrastructure funding for school buildings, a major contributor for inequity across districts
- Support is needed from federal government for curriculum and skilled trades
- K-12 basic/core learning needs to be improved
- Mandated but unfunded property tax incentives can sometimes pit business and other interests against local government
- State funding support needed for public safety training/workforce shortages
- Increase funding for wraparound services at schools, including: mental health/childcare/books/transportation
- Increase mental health funding, especially in schools; students want/need downtime during school day to meet with counselors
- Do not support corporate handouts; instead invest in roads/schools/support for childcare
- Increased eligibility and access to retraining opportunities should include seniors
- Wrap around social services should include connecting people to healthcare
- Provide equitable access to quality education
- Retain the current policy related to vouchers and public schools; protect public education; maintain the constitutional prohibition against funding private schools

Natural Assets

- Ensure that “Streamlining permitting” does not mean reducing environmental standards
- Need for more case-by-case analysis on some levels of environmental review
- “State or federal programs for acquisition, development, rehab of parks” – could extend this policy beyond parks to community resilience needs, including resident relocation, floodplain management, etc.
- Enhanced state park funding impacts locals/reflects on community as well
- Urban agriculture – support for local food production, local control over what is allowed where
- Single-use plastics – allow for local ordinances/ bag bills etc.
- Transferable development rights – allow for denser development that is offset with land preservation
- Development standards – provide resources to encourage and allow for land preservation/conservation with development projects
- PFAS monitoring and clean up is an emerging priority for many

- Townships have limited authority to regulate drinking water, surface water extraction – want more of a say
- Chemtrails: what are we monitoring, are harmful impacts being overlooked because they aren't regulated?
- Maintain support for the region's drinking water monitoring network
- Noise pollution is a concern that is difficult to address (flight path, construction projects, etc.)
- Better monitoring/mitigation needed for Industrial impacts close to residential areas
- Flooding challenge is top of mind for many communities – challenging to fund solutions sustainably (loan programs often don't meet their needs)
- Support for incentivizing or allowing green solutions where they have been proven to be effective, in processes that currently don't allow/ require them
- Need to increase tipping fees to reduce waste received from out of the region/ state
 - Discussion around increasing to the right level so it does not create a burden for local governments
- Concerns around privatized waste management services not meeting communities needs (or potentially losing control with mergers/ sales etc.)
- Concerns around lack of community input about what type of waste is accepted in their landfills
- Focus on how to fund from waste-originators, not taxing MI communities/ residents
- Support for more DNR grant funding to go toward population centers
- Support for more funding to address GREEN topics/ nature-based solutions
- Polluters should pay costs of cleanup

G. Final Questions and Next Steps

Frank Viviano, Supervisor, Macomb Township

Robert McCraight, Mayor, City of Romulus

Mr. Viviano thanked the meeting presenters and task force members for their participation and discussion. Mr. Viviano stated that a follow-up mailing would be sent to all task force members and reminded them to register for the September and November meetings to ensure that those dates are added to their calendars.

Attendance

Below is a list of Legislative Task Force members. Members present at this meeting are indicated by bold typeface:

Chairperson: Frank Viviano, Supervisor, Macomb Township

Vice-Chairperson: Robert McCraight, Mayor, City of Romulus

Aundrea, Armstrong, Deputy Administrator/CFO, Monroe County

Monique, Baker McCormick, Commissioner, District 6, Wayne County

Chris Barnett, Supervisor, Charter Township of Orion

Emily Bauman, Councilmember, City of Westland

Erica Briggs, Councilmember, Ward 5, City of Ann Arbor

Maureen Miller, Brosnan, Mayor, City of Livonia

Kat Bruner James, Councilmember, City of Ferndale

Charlie Cavell, Commissioner, District 19, Oakland County

Robert Clark, Mayor, City of Monroe

Sharlan Douglas, Commissioner, City of Royal Oak

Robb Drzewicki, Director of Government Affairs, City of Livonia
Michele Economou Ureste, Executive Director, Workforce Intelligence Network
Roslyn Grafstein, Mayor, City of Madison Heights
Mandy Grewal, Supervisor, Pittsfield Charter Township
Lisa Hicks-Clayton, Treasurer, City of Dearborn Heights
Donald Hubler, Secretary, Board of Education, Macomb ISD
Eunice Jeffries, Director, Government And Community Affairs, Oakland Community College
Dichondra Johnson, City of Ecorse
Valerie Kindle, Mayor, City of Harper Woods
Edwina King, Associate Director of Legislative Affairs and Equitable Development, City of Detroit
Laura Kropp, Mayor, City of Mount Clemens
Jan Lobur, Councilmember, City of Howell
Brian Marl, Mayor, City of Saline
Nicole McKee, Director, Government & Institutional Relations, Macomb Community College
Mark Monohon, Trustee, Waterford Township
Gregory Pitoniak, Chief Executive Officer, Southeast Michigan Community Alliance
Al Prieur, Deputy Supervisor, Bedford Township
Craig Puckett, Director of Legislative Affairs, Conference Of Western Wayne
Yousef Rabhi, Commissioner, District 8, Washtenaw County
Erik Rick, Commissioner, City of Mount Clemens
Pauline Repp, Mayor, City of Port Huron
Jason Smith, City Manager, City of Belleville
Lori Stone, Mayor, City of Warren
Dani Walsh, Supervisor, Charter Township Of Bloomfield
Lev Wood, Councilmember, City of Grosse Pointe Farms

SEMCOG Staff in attendance

Jenya Abramovich, Planner III, SEMCOG
Kylia Allen, Specialist, IT Support II, SEMCOG
Grant Brooks, Planner II, SEMCOG
Naheed Huq, Manager, Economic & Community Vitality, SEMCOG
Jaylyn King, Staff Assistant, Planning, SEMCOG
Tyler Klifman, Planner III, SEMCOG
Trevor Layton, Manager, Communications, SEMCOG
Amy Malmer, Manager, Membership, SEMCOG
Michael Spence, Manager, Government Affairs, SEMCOG
David Struck, Planner III, SEMCOG
Sheryl Theriot, Director, External Affairs, SEMCOG
Kevin Vettraino, Planning Director, SEMCOG

SEMCOG Lobbyists in attendance

Andrew Buczek, Government Policy Advisor, Dykema
Mary Beth McGowan, Government Policy Advisor, Dykema
Mike Compagnoni, Government Relations, Midwest Strategy Group
Dusty Fancher, Government Relations, Midwest Strategy Group

Adam Wright, Government Relations, Midwest Strategy Group