

SEMCOG 2027–2028 Legislative Policy Platform Task Force Meeting Summary

Friday, July 17, 2026

10 a.m.– 12 p.m.

Chairperson: Robert McCraight, Mayor, City of Romulus

Vice-Chairperson: Scott Benson, Councilmember, City of Detroit

A. Welcome and Introductions

Robert McCraight, Mayor, City of Romulus

Scott Benson, Councilmember, City of Detroit

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

B. Public Comment

No public comments were received.

C. Overview of Task Force Objectives and Timeline

Robert McCraight, Mayor, City of Romulus

Scott Benson, Councilmember, City of Detroit

Mr. McCraight reviewed the task force timeline, expectations, and upcoming meeting dates.

D. How SEMCOG advocates for Southeast Michigan in Lansing and Washington

Amy O’Leary, Executive Director, SEMCOG

Ms. O’Leary 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.

E. SEMCOG’s Plans, Policy Areas, and Emerging Regional Trends

Kevin Vettraino, Deputy Director, SEMCOG

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

F. Breakout Discussion on SEMCOG’s Legislative Policy Areas – 11:00 a.m.

Robert McCraight, Mayor, City of Romulus

Mr. McCraight 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.

Infrastructure/Transportation

- Maintain the comprehensive regional policy platform while updating it to address emerging infrastructure and funding challenges.
- Modernize infrastructure funding models, including communications infrastructure, to reflect changing technologies and declining traditional revenue sources.
- Promote regional funding mechanisms and cost-sharing approaches to address aging infrastructure and large-scale capital needs.
- Improve state funding, reimbursement, and local flexibility for road maintenance and infrastructure investment.
- Strengthen regional coordination among local governments, state agencies, utilities, and infrastructure providers to improve project planning, construction, maintenance, and public communication.
- Increase accountability for private utilities and contractors to ensure timely restoration of roads, sidewalks, ADA facilities, fiber networks, and other public infrastructure following construction.
- Invest proactively in replacing aging infrastructure, including roads, water systems, sewer systems, and underground utilities, before failures occur.
- Expand funding and incentives for green infrastructure, stormwater management, renewable energy readiness, and climate-resilient infrastructure.
- Prepare buildings and public infrastructure to support future solar energy, green roofs, and other sustainable technologies.
- Improve coordination of infrastructure planning to accommodate housing growth and changing community needs.
- Expand and sustain regional public transit through dedicated long-term funding and more coordinated and efficient service planning.
- Develop clear state guidance and implementation of processes for environmental regulations affecting infrastructure projects.
- Improve public education and transparency regarding infrastructure investments, emerging technologies, and data collection tools used for transportation and public safety.
- Establish consistent standards and oversight for transportation technologies and roadway safety infrastructure, including cameras and e-bike accommodations.
- Support regional collaboration to ensure an accurate and complete 2030 Census count.
- Address the economic impacts of infrastructure failures by improving the reliability and resilience of water, power, and transportation systems.
- Increase long-term, sustainable funding for roads, bridges, water, sewer, stormwater, and transit infrastructure through coordinated federal, state, regional, and local investment, specifically given the challenges with waning ARPA dollars.

Communities

- Modernize state revenue sharing to better reflect local service demands, inflation, and the true cost of providing municipal services, including strengthening the Revenue Sharing Trust Fund.
- Develop stable, flexible, and sustainable local funding sources, including options for stormwater utilities, local tax mechanisms, and other revenue tools that align with intended uses.
- Reduce unfunded state mandates by ensuring new requirements are adequately funded, supported by accurate cost estimates, and implemented in partnership with local governments.
- Increase transparency, fairness, and consistency in state funding and appropriations through nonpartisan, predictable funding processes.

- Protect local funding by discouraging state clawbacks and ensuring dedicated funds remain available for their intended purposes.
- Reform property tax policies to improve affordability, address the impacts of tax exemptions and uncapping, support aging in place, and maintain local government fiscal stability.
- Expand funding flexibility so local governments can respond to evolving community needs as one-time federal funding expires.
- Increase investment in public safety, election security, cybersecurity, and emergency preparedness as core local government responsibilities.
- Strengthen cybersecurity protections, data security, and technology infrastructure to address growing digital threats, fraud, and the impacts of artificial intelligence.
- Increase investment in mental health, homelessness, public health, and other social services that place growing demands on local governments.
- Support healthy communities through investments in sidewalks, parks, green space, active transportation, and other infrastructure that improves quality of life and public health.
- Improve permitting efficiency, regulatory consistency, and timely enforcement to reduce delays for development and infrastructure projects while maintaining environmental protections.
- Strengthen oversight and enforcement of environmental permits and solid waste facility regulations.
- Support local governments in attracting and retaining skilled employees through workforce development, leadership training, and greater local control over staffing decisions.
- Address workforce shortages, rising construction costs, and material shortages that affect public infrastructure and housing development.
- Increase housing affordability by reforming policies that limit the production of attainable housing and by supporting housing options that meet the needs of an aging population.
- Encourage greater transparency, accountability, and efficiency in government operations and public expenditures at all levels of government.

Economy and Workforce

- Strengthen collaboration between schools, local governments, employers, and workforce organizations to better align education with workforce needs.
- Expand career and technical education (CTE), apprenticeships, vocational training, and skilled trades programs through increased funding and incentives.
- Promote multiple career pathways beyond four-year college degrees while reducing financial barriers to education.
- Better align education curricula with emerging industries, future workforce demands, and evolving technologies such as artificial intelligence.
- Shift education policy toward workforce readiness and student outcomes rather than emphasizing standardized testing.
- Increase career preparation resources for students and improve parent awareness of career and employment pathways.
- Address workforce shortages across skilled trades, service industries, and local government.
- Improve transportation, childcare, and elder care services to reduce barriers to workforce participation.
- Support aging residents through employment opportunities and aging-in-place initiatives.
- Strengthen support for small businesses through technical assistance, training, certification programs, grant awareness, and investment.
- Improve coordination, consistency, and long-term funding among state agencies and economic development organizations.
- Increase employer involvement in shaping education and workforce training programs while improving workforce forecasting and industry planning.

- Invest in infrastructure, placemaking, and community assets that support economic development, entrepreneurship, and quality of life.
- Leverage waterways and transportation infrastructure to support freight movement, manufacturing, and economic growth.
- Plan for the impacts of emerging industries, including data centers, by addressing infrastructure, water use, environmental impacts, affordability, and public education.
- Increase funding and support for students with special needs.
- Recognize and plan for the impacts of federal policy changes and broader economic trends on Michigan's workforce and economy.

Natural Assets

- Revitalize waterfronts by balancing economic development with the protection and restoration of natural areas.
- Redevelop former industrial properties while addressing legacy pollution and environmental contamination.
- Strengthen connections to waterfronts and natural assets to support recreation, tourism, and economic development.
- Preserve rural character, farmland, open space, and other natural resources amid continued development.
- Encourage development that incorporates green infrastructure, trees, and natural features through planning tools and incentives.
- Improve resilience to flooding, stormwater runoff, and changing Great Lakes water levels.
- Protect water resources by addressing water quality, microplastics, commercial water withdrawals, hazardous waste, and the impacts of large-scale developments.
- Strengthen regional materials management by expanding recycling and composting, reducing landfill waste, improving hazardous waste disposal, and exploring regional waste management solutions.
- Increase oversight of landfill capacity and tipping fees to reduce reliance on external waste disposal.
- Improve collaboration and communication among local, regional, state, and federal partners on environmental planning, regulation, and cleanup efforts.
- Support greater local input into environmental decision-making while encouraging stronger state leadership and federal investment in environmental initiatives.
- Expand environmental education, outreach, and youth engagement to build long-term stewardship and improve public understanding of sustainability practices.
- Better leverage natural resources for recreation, tourism, conservation funding, and renewable energy opportunities.
- Invest in emergency preparedness and response for environmental and climate-related challenges.

G. Final Questions and Next Steps – 11:45 a.m.

Robert McCraight, Mayor, City of Romulus

Scott Benson, Councilmember, City of Detroit

Mr. McCraight thanked the meeting presenters and task force members for their participation and discussion. Mr. McCraight 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: Robert McCraight, Mayor, City of Romulus

Vice-Chairperson: Scott Benson, Councilmember, City of Detroit

Aaron Martinez, Councilmember, City of Novi

Emily Bauman, Councilmember, City of Westland

Shea Benjamin, Executive Project & Special Events Coordinator, Detroit Area Agency on Aging

Debbie Binder, Clerk, West Bloomfield Township

Quentin Bishop, City Manager, City of Marysville

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

Abdullah Hammoud, Mayor, City of Dearborn

Lisa Hansknecht, Government Relations and Community Services, Oakland County ISD

Donald Hubler, Macomb ISD

Eunice Jefferies, Director, Government and Community Affairs, Oakland County Community College

Milanna Jones, Councilmember, City of Pontiac

Irv Lowenberg, Treasurer, City of Southfield

Melody Magee, Councilmember, City of Warren

Robert McCann, Executive Director, K-12 Alliance of Michigan

Darwin McClary, Village Manager, Village of Lake Orion

Mike McCready, Supervisor, Bloomfield Township

Douglas McDonough, Township Manager, Northfield Township

Nicole McKee, Director, Government Relations, Macomb Community College

Matt Pfeiffer, Treasurer, Orion Township

Al Prieur, Supervisor, Bedford Township

David Randels, Executive Director, Oakland Schools ISD

Trish Reilly, Supervisor, Pittsfield Township

Nicole Rice, Mayor Pro Tem, City of Saline

Theresa Rich, Mayor, City of Farmington Hills

Larissa Richardson, Director of Regional Partnerships, Mayor's Office, City of Detroit

Erik Rick, Councilmember, City of Mount Clemens

Megan Sellers, Legislative Director, Oakland County

Kevin Spicher, Supervisor, Genoa Township

Mark St. Charles, Township Manager, Green Oak Township

Lori Stone, Mayor, City of Warren

David Swartout, Commissioner, Dist. 7, Monroe County

Andrew Swift, Mayor, City of Riverview

Eric Szor, Councilman, City of Lincoln Park

Ronald Taylor, President & CEO, Detroit Area Agency on Aging

Sheila Tomkowiak, Mayor, City of Grosse Pointe

Erik Tungate, City Manager, City of Oak Park

Kenneth Voigt, Mayor, City of Belleville

Jim Wagner, Trustee, District 7, Wayne County Community College District

Teri Weingarden, Treasurer, West Bloomfield Township

Rachel Witherspoon, Manager, City of Gibraltar

Eric Woody, Government Affairs Director, Wayne County

Guests in attendance

Jonita Edwards, Chief Administrative Officer, Detroit Area Agency on Aging

SEMCOG Staff in attendance

Jenya Abramovich, Transportation Planner III, SEMCOG
Michele Fedorowicz, Transportation and Mobility Manager, SEMCOG
Katherine Grantham, Environment and Infrastructure Planner III, SEMCOG
Nikki Hartley, Government Affairs Specialist II, SEMCOG
Naheed Huq, Economic & Community Vitality Manager, SEMCOG
Tyler Klifman, Environment and Infrastructure Planner III, SEMCOG
Trevor Layton, Communications Manager, SEMCOG
Amy O'Leary, Executive Director, SEMCOG
Tiffany Sanders, Environment and Infrastructure Planner II, SEMCOG
David Struck, Economic Development Coordinator, SEMCOG
Kevin Vettraino, Deputy Executive Director, SEMCOG

SEMCOG Lobbyists in attendance

Andrew Buczek, Government Policy Advisor, Dykema
Adam Wright, Government Relations, Midwest Strategy Group