



Legislative UPDATE

August 28, 2020
Number 34

TML Region 2 (Amarillo Area) Virtual Legislative Roundtable on August 31

TML will be hosting our first virtual legislative roundtable discussion with Region 2 on Monday, August 31, at 2:00 p.m. We are excited to be joined by Senator Kel Seliger, Representative John Smithee, Representative Four Price, and Representative Ken King. We encourage city officials in Region 2 to join us for an important discussion on the 87th Legislative Session which will provide an opportunity for city officials to engage with state elected leaders. Your voices matter most in the legislative process so we hope you will join us.

Please be sure to register [here](#). If you have any questions about the event, contact JJ Rocha at jj@tml.org.

We look forward to seeing Region 2 city officials virtually on August 31.

Legislative Committees Request Information on Interim Charges

Due to the ongoing pandemic and the uncertainty as to scheduling interim hearings, several legislative committees have issued notices of formal “requests for information” (“RFIs”) to which the public, including cities, may respond. The following is a non-exhaustive list of RFIs on city-relevant interim charges, sorted by the deadline for submitting comments. Interested city officials

may follow the links associated with each committee for more details about the procedure to submit comments:

August 31, 2020 – [House International Relations and Economic Development Committee](#):

- **Interim Charge 2:** Study Texas' current and future workforce pipeline structure, with a focus on input from the state's largest industries and middle skill employers. Examine what skill gaps exist within our state; identify methods of improving regional coordination and alignment between industry, the public workforce system, public schools, higher education institutions, and community-based organizations to create college and career pathways; and provide recommendations to overcome barriers in the workforce pipeline and to enhance career path options.
- **Interim Charge 3:** Study the state's seaport infrastructure and the infrastructure at land ports of entry to facilitate international trade and economic growth. Examine seaport infrastructure and the auxiliary rail and roadway needs connected to each port as well as the port's ability to keep pace with oil and gas production. Make recommendations to maximize the economic flow of goods and products to and from seaports and study the feasibility and economic impact of dredging and widening Texas ports in order to remain competitive in international trade. Examine the infrastructure at international border ports of entry in Texas and identify transportation-related impediments to international trade that negatively impact the state. Make recommendations to reduce border wait times, facilitate economic growth, and expedite trade. (Joint charge with the House Committee on Transportation.)
- **Interim Charge 5:** Review the connection between the economic vitality of business and industry and the economic vitality of our military veterans transitioning into the workforce. Specifically, the committee should analyze barriers to military veterans transitioning from active duty to civilian life, the effectiveness of government transition and training benefits, and current and ongoing demand for veteran and military spouse employment from industry in Texas. (Joint charge with the House Committee on Defense & Veterans' Affairs.)

September 8, 2020 – [House Insurance Committee](#):

- **Interim Charge 1:** Monitor the agencies and programs under the Committee's jurisdiction and oversee the implementation of relevant legislation passed by the 86th Legislature. Conduct active oversight of all associated rulemaking and other governmental actions taken to ensure intended legislative outcome of all legislation, including HB 1900, which amends the Texas Windstorm Insurance Association (TWIA) operations and funding practices. Review the rulemaking process by the Texas Department of Insurance (TDI) and the adoption of an updated plan of operation by TWIA. Monitor whether the purchase of reinsurance has increased or declined and determine whether this provision of the legislation has had any impact on premium rates. Monitor the appointment and work of the Legislative Funding and Funding Structure Oversight board.

September 14, 2020 – [House Ways and Means Committee](#):

- **Interim Charge 1.3:** Monitor the agencies and programs under the Committee's jurisdiction and oversee the implementation of relevant legislation passed by the 86th Legislature. Conduct active oversight of all associated rulemaking and other governmental actions taken to ensure intended legislative outcome of all legislation, including the following: HB 4347, which relates to the use of hotel occupancy, sales, and mixed beverage tax revenue for qualified projects. Examine the effectiveness and efficiency of the hotel projects, qualified hotel projects, and uses of local hotel occupancy tax revenue. Examine the negative fiscal impact to the state resulting from the dedication of the state portion of those taxes.
- **Interim Charge 2:** Study and consider possible methods of providing property tax relief, including potential sources of revenue that may be used to reduce or eliminate school district maintenance and operations property tax rates.
- **Interim Charge 3:** Study the role of the local option sales and use tax, including: an analysis of the available uses for those taxes, specifically economic development agreements; the statewide distribution of local tax rates; the proportion of the local government budget supported by sales and use taxes; the application of consistent sales sourcing rules; and the impact of shifting from origin to destination sourcing.

September 18, 2020 – [House Elections Committee](#):

- **Interim Charge 1:** Monitor the agencies and programs under the Committee's jurisdiction and oversee the implementation of relevant legislation passed by the 86th Legislature. Conduct active oversight of all associated rulemaking and other governmental actions taken to ensure intended legislative outcome of all legislation, including the following: HB 933, which requires election information to be posted on the Secretary of State's (SOS) and each county's internet website. Monitor the costs associated with implementing the legislation. Work with the SOS to determine which office elections should be included in the website postings based on costs and popularity of the office.
- **Interim Charge 2:** Make recommendations for establishing best practices for conducting an election during a declared disaster. Examine model legislation and statutes from other states pertaining to voting during a declared disaster when polls are inaccessible.
- **Interim Charge 3:** Evaluate election laws with the purpose of strengthening voter integrity and fair elections. Perform an in-depth study of the voter registration processes and explore whether centralizing voter registration would be more effective than today's processes. Consider ways to improve voter list maintenance and study the volunteer deputy registrar process and voter registration procedures in other states. Include in the evaluation a review of the state's curbside voting protocols and identify processes to improve the efficiency, privacy, and security of curbside voting.

September 18, 2020 – [House Transportation Committee](#):

- **Interim Charge 1:** Monitor the agencies and programs under the Committee’s jurisdiction and oversee the implementation of relevant legislation passed by the 86th Legislature. Conduct active oversight of all associated rulemaking and other governmental actions taken to ensure intended legislative outcome of all legislation, including the following:
 - SB 282 and SB 962, which relate to the funding for the State Highway Fund. Study the current mix of user fee-based funding for the state highway system, including registration fees, tolls, and fuel tax, and determine if current funding generated is sufficient to maintain cost demands. Examine whether current legislative appropriations, including projections for Proposition 1 (severance tax) and Proposition 7 (sales tax) funds, are keeping pace with Texas' highway funding needs to accommodate population and economic development growth. Make recommendations for additional methods of funding or innovative tools that the state could utilize to deliver road infrastructure projects.
 - SB 357, which relates to outdoor advertising signs. Monitor the Texas Department of Transportation's implementation of the new statutory requirements set forth in the legislation, including any related rulemaking.
- **Interim Charge 2:** Study the state's transportation and road safety efforts in support of the Texas Transportation Commission's goal of ending traffic deaths in the state by 2050. Identify the most dangerous roads and transportation corridors in the state and determine opportunities to reduce high rates of traffic accidents and fatalities in these areas. Make recommendations to improve policies, funding strategies, program development, and agency coordination to ensure continuous improvements to road safety.
- **Interim Charge 3:** Study the technology and safety aspects of autonomous and semi-autonomous vehicles, including predictive capabilities and the potential for dedicated freeway and surface lanes for public transportation, autonomous vehicles, and semi-autonomous vehicles. Make recommendations for optimizing state policy to prepare for varying vehicle technologies to ensure safety and traffic reliability on Texas roadways.
- **Interim Charge 4:** Study the state’s seaport infrastructure and the infrastructure at land ports of entry to facilitate international trade and economic growth. Examine seaport infrastructure and the auxiliary rail and roadway needs connected to each port as well as the port's ability to keep pace with oil and gas production. Make recommendations to maximize the economic flow of goods and products to and from seaports and study the feasibility and economic impact of dredging and widening Texas ports in order to remain competitive in international trade. Examine the infrastructure at international border ports of entry in Texas and identify transportation-related impediments to international trade that negatively impact the state. Make recommendations to reduce border wait times, facilitate economic growth, and expedite trade. (Joint charge with the House Committee on International Relations & Economic Development)

- The Committee also seeks the following information related to the COVID-19 pandemic:
 - Inquiry 1: How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected state agencies, interested parties, and the public as it relates to transportation matters?
 - Inquiry 2: What transportation issues are anticipated to arise in the future as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic?
 - Inquiry 3: How has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the ability of the transportation state agencies to accomplish their mission and to serve the public in an effective and efficient manner?

September 25, 2020 – [House Natural Resources Committee](#)

- **Interim Charge 1:** Monitor the agencies and programs under the Committee's jurisdiction and oversee the implementation of relevant legislation passed by the 86th Legislature. Conduct active oversight of all associated rulemaking and other governmental actions taken to ensure intended legislative outcome of all legislation, including the following:
 - HJR 4, SB 7, and SB 8, which relate to statewide and regional flood planning and mitigation. Monitor the progress of the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) and other entities to provide for the planning, development, and financing of drainage, flood mitigation, and flood control projects statewide to strengthen the state's infrastructure and resiliency to future floods.
 - HB 722, which relates to the development of brackish groundwater. Monitor the designation of Brackish Groundwater Production Zones by the TWDB and the adoption of rules by groundwater conservation districts for the production of brackish groundwater from those Zones.
 - HB 807, which relates to the state and regional water planning process. Monitor the appointment of the Interregional Planning Council by the TWDB and the Council's progress toward increasing coordination among Regional Water Planning Groups.
- **Interim Charge 2:** Study the efforts of the TCEQ, the TWDB, and the Public Utility Commission of Texas to incentivize, promote, and preserve regional projects to meet water supply needs and encourage public and private investment in water infrastructure. Identify impediments or threats to regionalization with special emphasis on:
 - Prioritization in planning and implementing the State Water Plan, Regional Water Plan, and other recommended water supply projects;
 - Barriers to private investment and the development of public-private partnerships to implement needed water supply projects, including the retail water and wastewater industry, to address the state's growth challenges;

- Public water and wastewater systems that are unable to meet federal and state standards due to inadequate operational capacity and factors that prevent such systems from being integrated into larger systems and processes that more easily facilitate the sale, transfer, or merger of systems;
- State agency authority to regulate regional water supply pricing.
- The committee also seeks written submissions on the following topics:
 - Emerging issues in groundwater and surface water interaction, in particular in areas of increasing competition for scarce resources.
 - The status of water markets in Texas and the potential benefits of and challenges to expanded markets for water.

October 30, 2020 – [House Licensing and Administrative Procedures Committee](#)

- **Interim Charge 1:** Monitor the agencies and programs under the Committee's jurisdiction and oversee the implementation of relevant legislation passed by the 86th Legislature. Conduct active oversight of all associated rulemaking and other governmental actions taken to ensure intended legislative outcome of all legislation, including the following:
 - HB 892, which relates to county regulation of game rooms. Monitor the status of counties statewide who have chosen to regulate game rooms and implement their own regulatory structure to combat illegal gambling activity via registration and permitting requirements, fees, disclosure of ownership, inspection schemes, and civil and criminal penalties.
 - HB 1545, which is the sunset legislation for the Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission. Monitor the implementation of the legislation and the agency's progress in the consolidation, repeal, and creation of certain licenses and permits and the adoption of new fees.

November 13, 2020 – [House Ways and Means Committee](#)

- **Interim Charge 1.1:** Monitor the agencies and programs under the Committee's jurisdiction and oversee the implementation of relevant legislation passed by the 86th Legislature. Conduct active oversight of all associated rulemaking and other governmental actions taken to ensure intended legislative outcome of all legislation, including the following:
 - S.B. 2, which is the Texas Property Tax Reform and Transparency Act of 2019. Monitor the implementation of the legislation, including a review of the tax rates adopted by taxing units in 2019 and 2020, the appraisal review board survey

system, and progress in onboarding the tax rate notices and websites. Make recommendations for modifications as necessary and appropriate.

National Telecommunications and Infrastructure Administration to Host Webinar Series on Broadband Connectivity

The National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), as part of its BroadbandUSA program, promotes innovation and economic growth by supporting efforts to expand broadband access and meaningful use across America. BroadbandUSA serves local and state governments, industry, and nonprofits that seek to expand broadband connectivity and promote digital inclusion. BroadbandUSA will host a series of webinars on a monthly basis to engage the public and stakeholders with information to accelerate broadband connectivity, improve digital inclusion, strengthen policies, and support local priorities.

The Practical Broadband Conversations webinar series will provide an ongoing source of information on a range of topics including best practices for improving broadband deployment, digital inclusion, workforce skills, smart communities, and economic development.

NTIA will post registration information here: <https://broadbandusa.ntia.doc.gov/event>.

Governor Abbott Sets Special Election Date for Texas Senate District 30

Governor Abbott announced this week that the special election to replace Sen. Pat Fallon (R-Prosper) will be held on September 29 with early voting to begin September 14. Governor Abbott issued an "emergency special election" proclamation which allows him to schedule the election on a tighter timeline in order for SD 30 to have representation when the Legislature meets in January.

Not sure which Senate District you live in? Click [here](#) to find out who represents you at the federal and state levels.

Final Call: Resolutions for the 2020 TML Annual Conference

The TML Constitution states that resolutions for consideration at the annual conference must be submitted to the TML headquarters 45 calendar days prior to the first day of the Annual Conference. For 2020, this provision means that resolutions from any member city, TML region, or TML affiliate must arrive at the TML headquarters no later than **5:00 p.m. on August 31, 2020**.

For details on the submission process, go to:

https://www.tml.org/DocumentCenter/View/2020/Memo-for-Cities-2020-05312020_final_corrected-date

To learn more about how resolutions fit within the League's Legislative Policy Development Process, go to:

<https://www.tml.org/DocumentCenter/View/1859/2019-2020-Policy-Process-53120>.

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Updates

The Texas Municipal League is open for business. The building is closed to all but essential personnel and most staff is working remotely, but the League remains open for business and is fully ready to serve. Cities are encouraged to call or email for legal assistance, help with ordinances, or for general advice or assistance. Let us know how we can assist you and your city.

Call TML staff at 512-231-7400, or email Scott Houston for legal assistance at SHouston@tml.org; Rachael Pitts for membership support at RPitts@tml.org; and the training team for questions about conferences and workshops at training@tml.org.

The League has prepared a coronavirus clearinghouse [web page](#) to keep cities updated. In addition, everyone who receives the *Legislative Update* should receive a daily email update each afternoon with information on new developments. The daily email updates will be our primary means of communication during the pandemic. Those emails are being archived [chronologically](#) as well as by [subject matter](#).

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