

# CITY OF TACOMA 2020 FEDERAL PRIORITIES

## GENERAL GOVERNMENT

### **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 programs wisely and will continue to draw on their support to advance its priority initiatives such as the *Affordable Housing Action Strategy (AHAS)* to safeguard and increase the number of affordable, available, and accessible housing units throughout the city over 10 years.

### **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 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** 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. 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**

On September 20, 2019 Tacoma's youth and young adults joined with their companions around the world to call for a global climate strike and greater, more urgent climate leadership from their elected officials and public institutions. 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. These cities 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.

### **Human Dignity and Safety**

The Northwest ICE Processing 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 instead utilize 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 urges Congress to **provide and ensure funding is accessible to cities to respond to the national opioid epidemic**. Every day, an average of two Washington residents dies from an opioid-related overdose. Tacoma, one of the conveners of the Pierce County Opioid Task Force, is also one of six cities from across the country that was selected to participate in the National League of Cities Mayors’ Institute on Opioids.

In 2017, 39,773 people died from gun-related injuries in the United States; three quarters of all murders and approximately half of all suicides involved a firearm. Every year, 600 American women are shot to death by intimate partners. Finding and declaring that gun violence directly affects the city and its residents, the Tacoma City Council adopted a Firearms and Ammunition Tax. 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**.

### **Employer-provided Healthcare Coverage**

A provision of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) that would impose a 40% tax on the most generous employer-provided health insurance plans that has yet to take effect, known as the “Cadillac tax,” would have a negative impact on cities as employers. For the City of Tacoma, a 2016 study indicated that City could owe as much as \$6M per year starting in 2025. The City has experienced recent positive trends in healthcare costs so the potential tax impacts have been pushed out for a few years beyond 2025. However, the tax still represents a significant financial risk. **The City supports repeal of the 40% tax on employer-provided healthcare coverage.**

## TACOMA PUBLIC UTILITIES

### **TPU-Wide**

*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**

*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 115<sup>th</sup> Congress.

*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 proposals to improve BPA's competitiveness:* TPU will continue to support federal proposals to improve BPA's competitiveness. Specific examples include legislation that would more accurately allocate Federal Columbia River Power System (FCRPS) costs to BPA customers and authority to directly purchase carbon allowances as a result of wholesale power sales.

*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.

*Support federal programs to improve broadband access for lower-income residents:* TPU will support federal programs, including the FCC's Lifeline Program, that help make broadband services more affordable for low-income residents.

## **Tacoma 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 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**

*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.