



GREATER
MANKATO
GROWTH

2020 Policy Priorities

The following priorities represent a series of policy issues that are of interest to Greater Mankato Growth’s members and our regional marketplace. Each priority is assigned to one of three categories of advocacy that GMG is currently pursuing on that issue as follows:

- **Advocate** – GMG supports the issue and will take a leading and active role in advancing and securing a favorable outcome.
- **Support** – GMG supports the issue and will take action to advance it, such as writing a letter or testifying, but is not actively leading advocacy efforts.
- **Member Education & Engagement** – GMG is providing its members and the community with the information and tools they need to become engaged on issues that are of importance to them.

ADVOCATE

State/Federal Issues	Regional/Local Issues
<p><u>Transportation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate for completion of U.S. Highway 14 as a consistent four-lane corridor from Rochester to New Ulm. <p><u>Agriculture</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate for any opportunity to continue State of Minnesota’s strategic investment in GreenSeam. <p><u>Economic Development</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate for the proposal presented by the City of North Mankato to secure state funding in support of a regional fieldhouse at Caswell Park. 	<p><u>Economic Development</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate for the development of regional recreation facilities and critical public infrastructure projects by supporting Mankato, North Mankato, and other partners in their efforts to coordinate and advance projects.

SUPPORT

State/Federal Issues	Regional/Local Issues
<p><u>Transportation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support continued investment in statewide comprehensive transportation funding that meets the future needs of our regional transportation system. • Support changes to the Corridors of Commerce program that will better ensure regional equity and secure significant and ongoing funding. • Support the legislative priorities of the US Highway 14 Partnership and the US Highway 169 Coalition. <p><u>Business Issues</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce’s Federation Priorities • Support selected priorities of the US Chamber of Commerce. • Support continued efforts to strengthen the Americans With Disabilities Act and Minnesota Human Rights Act to prevent abusive lawsuits. <p><u>Economic Development</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the legislative agenda of the Greater Minnesota Partnership. <p><u>Education / Workforce Development</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the proposed capital improvements by Minnesota State University, Mankato. • Support the budget requests of our regional education institutions. 	<p><u>Transportation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support construction of the trail between Mankato and St. Peter. • Explore potential for including expansions to North/South highway corridors (Hwy 22 & 169) in future regional transportation plans. <p><u>Business Issues</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support regional efforts to identify policy solutions that would address challenges relating to childcare access and affordability. • Support regional efforts to identify policy solutions to address challenges relating to affordable & workforce housing. <p>Education / Workforce Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support partnerships among our education institutions and businesses that promote meaningful career connections through increased numbers of students engaging in hands-on opportunities with our regional employers. <p>Note: Greater Mankato is facing a significant talent gap which will necessitate the region to undertake purposeful efforts to attract and retain talent. Many of the legislative priorities identified (i.e. housing, childcare, recreation amenities, quality education etc.) are part of that regional strategy.</p>

MEMBER EDUCATION & ENGAGEMENT

State/Federal Issues	Regional/Local Issues
<p><u>Business Issues</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Educate and engage members on policy proposals related to state-mandated paid sick/safe time off and paid family leave.	<p><u>Agriculture</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase awareness within our organization as well as that of our members of GreenSeam and key agriculture issues impacting our region.



2020 Legislative Policy Positions

MISSION: The U.S. Highway 14 Partnership (“The Partnership”) supports the completion of a consistent four-lane corridor on U.S. Highway 14 from Rochester to New Ulm.

STATE POLICY POSITIONS:

1. The Partnership opposes any delay or defunding of projects that have been identified for completion:
 - The “New Ulm Gateway Project,” to improve the Highway 14/15 intersection and bridge over the Minnesota River
 - Highway 14 expansion from Owatonna to Dodge Center
2. The Partnership will work to secure state funding for the projects that are currently unplanned and unfunded or underfunded:
 - The Highway 14 four-lane expansion from New Ulm to (west) Nicollet.
 - Funding for safety improvements along existing four-lane sections of Highway 14 where additional upgrades are required to promote safety.
 - The development of a draft Environmental Impact Statement for the TH14/TH169 interchange.
 - The two-lane upgrade of Highway 14 west of New Ulm. MnDOT should study the expansion of Highway 14 west of New Ulm.
3. Recognizing that the Corridors of Commerce program has funded numerous improvements to Highway 14 since its creation and remains the state’s only alternative transportation funding program that prioritizes highway safety and expansion projects, the Partnership supports the continued and ongoing funding of the Corridors of Commerce program, or a successor to the Corridors of Commerce program designed to achieve the same goals. The goals of this program are to build highway capacity by removing bottlenecks, improve the movement of freight, and remove barriers to commerce. Projects are selected and awarded by MnDOT on a competitive basis. Given the billions of dollars of unmet need for highway expansion projects throughout the state in addition to Highway 14, the Partnership supports at least \$200 million in annual program funding.
4. The Partnership supports program and project scoring criteria for Corridors of Commerce, or any successor to the Corridors of Commerce program, that recognize the unique characteristics that make rural two-lane highways dangerous and inefficient, as well as criteria that emphasize project readiness. The Partnership opposes any efforts to modify Corridors of Commerce program criteria in ways that do not uphold the program’s original goals or that disadvantage vital corridors like U.S. Highway 14.
5. The Partnership supports the \$25 million annual Trunk Highway cash appropriation for Corridors of Commerce appropriation included in the 2017 transportation bill and opposes any efforts to repeal or reduce this appropriation. While the Partnership supports the use of Trunk Highway bonds, this cash appropriation is vital for non-bondable project needs such as right-of-way acquisition, environmental work and design.
6. The Partnership supports a division of Corridors of Commerce funding in which Greater Minnesota projects receive at least 50% of funding.

7. The Partnership opposes legislation that designates specific projects eligible for Corridors of Commerce program funding irrespective of the eligibility criteria set forth in state statute.

8. The Partnership will support measures to generate additional revenue for transportation projects, including, but not limited to:

- Appropriation of trunk highway bonds;
- Gas tax increase, including indexing;
- Increase in Motor Vehicles Sales Tax;
- Increase in motor vehicle registration taxes;
- A gross receipts tax on motor fuels.

9. The Partnership supports the inclusion of language that specifically directs resources towards Highway 14 in transportation finance legislation.

10. The Partnership supports the statutory allocation of the MVST constitutional amendment, with a 60% dedication to highways, 36% dedication to metro-area transit, and 4% dedication to Greater Minnesota transit. The Partnership opposes any legislative effort to reduce the percentage of funding dedicated to the Highway User Tax Distribution Fund.

11. The Partnership supports state research and study of alternative measures to fund transportation projects including value capture fees, tolling, congestion pricing, mileage fees, and weight fees.

12. Public-private partnerships between MnDOT and private interests should not replace or downgrade programmed highway expansion projects or other meritorious highway expansion projects like those on Highway 14.

13. The Partnership encourages Highway 14 corridor legislators to secure positions on the Senate Transportation and Public Safety Budget Division and House Transportation Finance Committee

14. The Partnership requests MnDOT to create a National Highway Freight Network in accordance with the federal FAST Act surface transportation funding program. The Partnership further requests MnDOT to designate U.S. Highway 14 as a critical rural freight corridor and to apply for federal funding to support the expansion of U.S. Highway 14 to four lanes between New Ulm and Rochester.

FEDERAL POLICY POSITIONS:

1. The Highway 14 Partnership supports and encourages efforts by MnDOT and Minnesota's Congressional Delegation to secure federal funding for Highway 14 expansion, including through application for funding through the Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) Grant program or other federal transportation funding opportunities.

2. Any new federal funds directed to Highway 14 are meant to supplement current funding and do not act as replacement of state funding.

3. The Partnership encourages Congressional members representing the Highway 14 corridor to secure positions on the House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee or the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee.

Adopted by the full membership on January 15, 2020

2020 Federation Priorities

Local chambers represent economic vitality in their communities. The Minnesota Chamber Federation unites and amplifies the voice of local chambers by advocating for policies to advance business in every corner of the state. Federation partners represent 43 communities and more than 21,000 businesses. They have worked to promote pro-growth policies to the Legislature for more than a decade, helping ensure that state lawmakers understand the needs and interests of Minnesota's diverse and successful local business community.

The Federation has the following policy priorities for the 2020 Legislative Session:

Workplace Management

We are committed to providing the best workplaces for employees. This includes sharing employers' best practices so all businesses are aware of effective approaches to maintaining progressive workplaces to retain and compete for the best employees. Employers adhere to strict labor laws and workplace standards at the state and federal level to maintain safe, healthy, respectful and inclusive workplaces. They must have flexibility to make staffing decisions and provide appropriate wages, benefits and schedules for their workplace and industry.

- We oppose "one size fits all" state mandates that limit employers' ability to design competitive benefit packages for their employees.

Minnesota has 853 cities and 87 counties. When local-level government bodies pass workplace mandates, it creates an administrative nightmare for employers and could cause unintentional errors subjecting businesses to legal action.

- We support state legislation that explicitly prohibits local government labor mandates.

As new laws and regulations are imposed on Minnesota's employers, enacting technical changes can create onerous compliance concerns.

- We will pursue modifications to the 2019 wage theft law that has far-reaching, overly complicated requirements for employers.

Tax Competitiveness

Minnesota's high taxes continue to rank as a top barrier to economic growth, according to chamber members. Business taxes are among the highest in the nation in many categories. High taxes negatively impact innovation, entrepreneurship, talent recruitment and investment – the very catalysts needed to foster economic growth. The Minnesota Chamber Federation has a broad tax reform agenda including business property tax relief, personal and corporate rate reductions, estate tax federal conformity and enhancement of the research and development tax credit.

- We support tax relief for businesses that pay taxes through their personal tax returns by adopting federal conformity with Section 179 business expensing rules.

Environmental Sustainability

We recognize scientific consensus that the climate is changing due to human activity. Environmental sustainability and economic competitiveness, if done right, are not mutually exclusive.

- We support the Legislature recognizing that state policies could result in disruption or discontinuation of business operations in Minnesota, considerably affect state and local economies, and may only marginally impact global environmental progress.
- We support state policymakers pursuing policies that collectively enable a cleaner environment, recognize technological and economical limitations, support and advance innovation, maintain a secure economy and protect jobs.
- We support environmental policies that drive private investment in Minnesota while helping employers reduce environmental impacts.

Health Care

Minnesota already requires health insurance policies to cover more than 60 benefits – one of the longest lists of required benefits in the country. Large employers tend to insure their workers under federal law. As a result, these state mandates negatively impact small employers. Research shows the average mandate increases premiums by .44% to 1.11% annually.

- We support requiring a cost-benefit analysis before any proposal to add insurance mandates to state law.

Education and Workforce Development

Minnesota's education and workforce development efforts must align with employer needs, for our skilled workforce to continue to be a cornerstone of our competitive business climate. Systemic reforms are necessary to raise all student achievement, ensuring every high school graduate is ready for postsecondary education or a career.

- We support private-sector initiatives to increase employer engagement in the training of workers in addition to supporting policies that ensure student readiness. Local chambers' private-sector led "Business Education Network" is connecting employers, students and learning institutions to local job opportunities and needed academic and training preparation for those jobs.

Students are better prepared for the future when they make meaningful career connections during their school years. Postsecondary and dual-credit programs provide high school students with credit toward certificates and degrees from high schools, two-year colleges and four-year universities, and should be promoted.

- We support fostering and encouraging career exploration and hands-on training opportunities for students.

Postsecondary institutions and workforce programs should track and adapt to changes in the labor market and workforce needs. Access to work-based learning and career pathway resources should be expanded with data-driven efforts including workforce supply and demand projections.

- We support using data to better understand training needs and high-demand careers. Transparency and accessibility improvements should be made to the programmatic and institutional information made public to allow students to make informed decisions on the institutions and programs that best fit their needs.



2020 Greater Minnesota Partnership Policy Positions

The GMNP supports the following economic development positions in the 2019-20 legislative session:

1. **Market Rate Workforce Housing**

The GMNP supports programs to address the critical workforce housing shortage in Greater Minnesota. This includes at least \$20 million in funding for workforce housing grant programs focused on increasing the supply of units in communities that can grow now. The GMNP supports workforce housing programs that have no income or population restrictions, and which are focused on economic development. The legislature should fund affordable or workforce housing programs at a level that accounts for the cost of prevailing wage regulations in housing construction, or should seek reforms to reduce those costs. Any new tax credit proposals should include money for workforce housing.

2. **Greater Minnesota Child Care**

To eliminate the child care shortage in Greater Minnesota, the GMNP supports legislative initiatives that:

- a) Improve the ability of child care providers to provide high-quality care while operating a financially sustainable business model; this could include grants and low-interest loans for training and capacity expansion, regulatory and inspection improvements, and business development support and training.
- b) Create markets where families have access to high-quality and affordable child care; this could include enhancements to the state's child care tax credit program.
- c) Build a stable child care provider workforce. This may include providing business development support for providers starting or growing in Greater Minnesota, training for providers, financial incentives to encourage workers to enter and remain in the industry, benefits for families to decrease the financial burden of accessing child care, and other policies and programs that will increase the supply of both center-based and home-based child care options.

3. **Greater MN Business Development Public Infrastructure (BDPI) Grant Program**

The GMNP supports at least \$20 million in bonding and \$5 million in a general fund appropriation for the BDPI grant program. It should remain a stand-alone program open to only Greater Minnesota without earmarks to specific geographic areas or for specific projects.

4. **Broadband Expansion**

The GMNP supports at least \$50 million to be appropriated to the Border-to-Border Broadband Development Grant program. At least half of any appropriation should be available to those areas that lack access to service that meets the 2026 state speed goals. The GMNP opposes policies that limit how much grant dollars can be spent in these areas.



2020 Greater Minnesota Partnership Policy Positions

The GMNP also opposes the challenge process, which gives large providers power to determine that a community shouldn't receive a grant.

5. **Transportation**

The GMNP supports a comprehensive approach for transportation, which includes sufficient funding to both maintain and expand Minnesota's transportation system. This includes at least \$200 million for Corridors of Commerce. The GMNP also supports an additional \$50 million for city streets. The GMNP supports a comprehensive approach to transportation, including surplus general fund dollars and new dedicated state revenues.

6. **Water Quality Regulations**

As Minnesotans, we support and value our natural resources, including clean water. The GMNP supports requiring cost-benefit analysis of new or amended water quality regulations that impact our communities, before they are adopted; supports requiring independent scientific peer review of regulations that will impose excessive costs on communities; supports requiring site specific analysis when translating standards into permit requirements; and supports preventing the enforcement of unadopted rules.

7. **Bonding and Infrastructure in Greater Minnesota**

Bonding bills should focus on local roads and bridges, wastewater, and other infrastructure that grows local economies in Greater Minnesota. In addition, of projects identified as being located in the metro area or Greater Minnesota, at least 50% of all capital investment funding should be directed at Greater Minnesota.

8. **Greater Minnesota Job Training**

- a) The GMNP supports the Job Training Incentive Program and any necessary updates to make it more responsive to the needs of Greater Minnesota employers. The program should have an ongoing base budget of at least \$4 million annually.
- b) The GMNP supports efforts to work with our Minnesota State partners to enhance technical job training programs.

9. **Local Government Aid (LGA)**

The GMNP supports restoring the LGA program to its 2002 funding level and annual increases in its appropriation thereafter. LGA helps Greater Minnesota businesses receive needed city services while restraining local property taxes.

10. **DEED Grant Programs**

The GMNP supports increased funding for the Minnesota Investment Fund (MIF), the Job Creation Fund, the Redevelopment Grant Program, and the Demolition Loan Program. The GMNP supports any additional changes to provide a more balanced distribution of funding between the metro area and Greater Minnesota.