SEMCOG | SOUTHEAST MICHIGAN COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

Legislative Policy Platform and Priorities

2027-2028

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2027 Policy Priorities

The following legislative priorities address key issues affecting SEMCOG and our members, drawing on SEMCOG's technical expertise to inform effective policymaking. These priorities will guide SEMCOG's advocacy to start the 2027-2028 legislative session.

1. Protect and diversify local government and education revenues to ensure resilient Southeast Michigan communities.
2. Encourage the State to address housing affordability in partnership with communities through programs that reflect local needs and leverage existing and planned infrastructure investments.
3. Improve safety and accessibility for all transportation system users through infrastructure investment, public education, and data-driven traffic laws and practices, including those related to emerging micromobility options.
4. Ensure Southeast Michigan's flooding challenges are addressed through long-term, locally driven solutions, including stormwater utility legislation.
5. Increase funding and resources for regional planning activities to enhance regional coordination and implementation capacity, and ensure that State and federal agencies base priorities, programs, and investments on adopted regional plans, data, and coordination.
6. Support local decision-making for communities considering large-scale data centers and other high-intensity facilities by ensuring greater transparency on community impacts, resources for productive public engagement, and tools to inform local planning and decision-making.

INFRASTRUCTURE

	MANAGING REGIONAL ASSETS
1	Support funding for public infrastructure projects while providing resources to advance asset management principles, collect infrastructure imagery and data, and facilitate effective planning and strategic infrastructure coordination among all stakeholders.
2	Direct program administration and resources to the community level, especially when local leaders have the expertise and capacity needed to make program delivery successful.
3	Enable regions to be eligible recipients of infrastructure funding in instances where a regional approach is more effective, efficient, reflects local support, and strengthens coordination across community boundaries.
4	Support proactive investments in assessing, maintaining, and modernizing aging infrastructure, particularly through additional formula-based resources from State and federal partners.
5	Address regional and local needs by supporting flexibility in the use of State and federal infrastructure funds, and ensure adequate local infrastructure investments.
6	Respect the responsibility of local governments to manage the use of the public right-of-way and utility easements and incentivize service providers and utility owners to work with local governments. Oppose proposals that would require local governments to pay for the costs associated with relocation and maintence of private utility facilities within the public easements.
7	Ensure adequate resources and funding to support regional planning (e.g., transportation/mobility, broadband, parks and recreation, water resources/ stormwater), especially federally designated planning activities, including Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), water/air quality, and Economic Development District designations.
8	Support energy policies that balance reliable and affordable energy with the environmental benefits of renewable, clean, and sustainable energy options.
9	Provide resources and remove legislative barriers to communities working to establish publicly owned utilities.
10	Ensure that State and federal agencies base priorities, programs, and investments on adopted regional plans, data, and coordination.
11	Advocate for policies that ensure large-scale data centers and other manufacturing do not adversely affect community energy and water supplies and are consistent with existing and planned infrastructure capacity.
12	Support emergency preparedness planning, mutual aid programs, cybersecurity initiatives, and investments that strengthen continuity of operations for water, wastewater, drainage, stormwater infrastructure, and transportation.
13	Ensure that funding and programs align with long-established statewide regional planning boundaries and support coordination of regional activities across Michigan.
14	Support streamlined permitting and review processes, adequate staffing for governmental regulatory agencies to ensure timely approvals, and responsive federal and State departments that adapt to evolving community needs.
15	Ensure the continued health and economic benefit of our water resources by supporting the Great Lakes Compact and preventing diversions of Great Lakes water.

TRANSFORMING TRANSPORTATION	
16	Support the long-term diversification of revenue sources for the transportation system to ensure stable and predictable funding.
17	Support the equitable allocation of State and federal transportation funds, including evaluation of existing funding mechanisms when disparities negatively impact Southeast Michigan communities.
18	Support secure, efficient, and modernized international border crossings within the region.
19	Promote policies that support safety and accessibility for all users of the transportation system through infrastructure funding, public education, and development and enforcement of traffic laws based on regional data and technical expertise.
20	Support funding and resources for transit systems that are safe, efficient, reliable, connected, and meet regional and local needs.
21	Support State and federal policies that provide clarity, guidance, and resources for communities and consumers to ensure safety with new forms of micromobility, and recognize the existing 3-class framework for e-bikes.
22	Ensure coordinated and standardized deployment and modernization of transportation infrastructure and technology across community boundaries.
23	Enforce and reevaluate current truck weight limits, overweight load permitting fees, and criteria; ensure that revenues are directed to improving the safety and integrity of the State's roads and bridges.
24	Support State and federal investment in ports and encourage coordination to directly invest in facilities and encourage maritime-related economic development and environmental sustainability.
25	Encourage resources to effectively and safely deploy infrastructure related to electric and autonomous vehicles, advanced air mobility, and other emerging technologies.

INFRASTRUCTURE

	MODERNIZING WATER SYSTEMS
26	Minimize the threat of litigation for local governments to fund stormwater system construction, improvements, and operations using stormwater utilities.
27	Strengthen provisions to eliminate liability for damages from rain events that exceed system design standards.
28	Increase resources and broaden eligibility for state and federal investments in drinking water, wastewater, stormwater, and related infrastructure through flexible, low- to zero-match grant and loan programs that address regional and local priorities.
29	Ensure clean water for Southeast Michigan residents through strengthened resources for drinking water source monitoring.
30	Support funding for the rehabilitation and replacement of aging water infrastructure, including lead service lines on public and private property, while continuing to pursue legislation that supports replacement as part of asset management planning and infrastructure coordination.
31	Support ongoing statewide resources and technical assistance to local health departments and the development of a statewide sanitary code to address sustainable onsite sewage disposal system standards (including private septic systems).
32	Support federal and state efforts to implement sustainable water affordability programs that assist eligible households without compromising critical infrastructure investments.
33	Enhance flood resilience through investments in planning, programs, and project implementation that reduce long-term risks to people and property from extreme weather events, while expanding resources for flood recovery, basement backup mitigation, and preventative sewer and stormwater system improvements.
34	Support modernization of the Drain Code and funding mechanisms that enable county drains, regional drainage systems, and stormwater infrastructure to be maintained, rehabilitated, and replaced using asset management and life cycle planning principles.
35	Support biosolids management, resource recovery, nutrient recovery and beneficial reuse and innovative residuals management strategies that protect public health and the environment.

LOCAL FINANCE	
36	Support local options for more diverse and sustainable sources of local government revenue to reduce reliance on property taxes and rectify inequities in tax structures across types of residential, commercial, and industrial property.
37	Resolve constitutional problems associated with property taxes, such as the limiting effects of Proposal A and needless Headlee rollbacks.
38	Protect local property tax revenue as the primary source of funding for local governments, and ensure that changes to Michigan's property tax system do not negatively impact local government revenues.
40	Ensure that State and federal funding programs provide flexibility to meet the unique needs of communities.
41	Reimburse local governments for lost revenues associated with State changes to tax laws and economic development incentives.
42	Protect and increase statutory revenue sharing funding levels, advocate for the continuation of the Public Safety Revenue Sharing funds, and establish a permanent revenue sharing trust fund.
43	Provide financial incentives for voluntary local government and school district collaboration or consolidation.
44	Support efforts to balance the needs of public sector workers with community finances to sustain service quality and adequate staffing levels.
45	Maintain tax-exempt municipal bonds and restore advanced refunding.
46	Protect local governments and education institutions against unfunded mandates and backfill previous unfunded mandates.
47	Enact provisions in property tax foreclosure law to reflect the realities created by current case law.
48	Support State and federal policies that provide resources to communities dealing with environmentally based health issues such as PFAS and lead in water, as well as air quality, especially in areas where the population has fewer financial resources to remedy the problem.
49	Provide resources and flexibility for local governments and schools to assist with pension funding and other post-employment benefit (OPEB) challenges.
50	Support policies to prevent property tax foreclosure, including disclosure of tax assessment increases for prospective residential homebuyers.
51	Provide resources for the proactive modernization or replacement of aging municipal and education buildings and facilities.
52	Ensure that local government and education revenues keep pace with increasing wage and benefit costs to support the workforce needs of the public sector.

	LOCAL OPERATIONS
53	Support policies and programs that facilitate aging in place to accommodate the significant growth forecast in the number of individuals over the age of 65.
54	Protect local decision-making, guarding against State mandates on local fiscal/operational issues, zoning/land use, and other issues where the needs of communities are best served by locally elected governing boards.
55	Maintain an appropriate level of governmental immunity and expand these protections in areas that conflict with essential local government operations.
56	Provide additional resources and training in the assessment of residential, commercial, and industrial properties.
57	Ensure that funding and resources are available to conduct federal data collection and analysis, including the Decennial Census and American Community Survey, to provide essential demographic and economic data for the public, businesses, and communities, and to secure the ability of the Census Bureau to meet its constitutional mandate.
58	Ensure that regulations on federal and State data allow the use of emerging technologies with appropriate guardrails to analyze data critical to communities.
59	Support State and federal resources for local governments and schools to use AI, advanced analytics, and digital infrastructure while maintaining transparency, cybersecurity, data privacy, and public trust.
60	Encourage federal and State departments to streamline grant applications and reduce matching requirements, especially for smaller communities with less administrative capacity and funding.
61	Support policies and resources to attract and train public sector employees (such as public safety staff and water system operators) to address workforce shortages.
62	Provide resources to support training for election officials and workers and modernize election equipment and technology to ensure the continued integrity and security of elections.
63	Encourage the State Legislature to comply with its self-imposed statutory timeline for budget passage to ensure operational stability for local governments and education institutions.
64	Advocate for additional resources for communities adopting emerging public safety technologies, and ensure regulation of new technologies aligns with community needs.
65	To encourage democratic participation and civility, while recognizing harmful and threatening behavior, support policies and resources to ensure the safety of candidates, elected, and appointed officials at all levels, including online and offline threats, intimidation, and doxing, while preserving First Amendment rights.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	
66	Support Southeast Michigan's priority industry clusters, including efforts to make Michigan the leader in implementing the next generation of air and land mobility.
67	Encourage the State to take action on Michigan's declining population and develop a consistent long-term strategy to attract, retain, and grow its population.
68	Support community and economic development incentives that attract a diversity of business investment, create quality places, and strengthen communities while including safeguards to ensure community benefits of development are realized.
69	Foster innovation and entrepreneurship to create a startup-friendly environment by enhancing access to informational, financial, cultural, and technology resources.
70	Recognize placemaking and small business development as an economic driver by providing funding and resources through federal and State programs and initiatives, reflecting the diversity and unique circumstances of our communities.
71	Encourage federal investment, procurement, and training for defense, human services, homeland security, and other services/programs within Southeast Michigan.
72	Provide resources to further develop the blue economy and boost tourism, leveraging the region's natural assets and water trails as economic drivers.
73	Provide funding for planning and resources to promote industry diversification, reduce vulnerability to sector-specific downturns, and enhance long-term economic stability.
74	Support resources for communities considering large-scale data centers and other high-intensity facilities, including: incentives to direct development toward brownfields and existing industrial sites; technical and financial assistance to evaluate infrastructure, water, energy, and economic impacts; and educational tools and other resources that help communities with public engagement and planning.
75	Support the full deployment of affordable high-speed broadband, especially in rural and underserved areas, while ensuring coordination with local community plans when developing or expanding private networks.
76	Encourage the State and federal governments to create additional resources and financial incentives, as well as flexibility in current financing options, that support local and regional efforts to ensure the availability and preservation of a variety of housing options to meet community needs, attract workers, create stable and vibrant neighborhoods, and utilize existing or planned infrastructure capacity.

WORKFORCE	
77	Increase eligibility and access to affordable and marketable skills training; ease requirements for the transfer of skills/certification for adults re-entering the workforce – especially military personnel, returning citizens, persons with disabilities, and aging residents.
78	Address workforce participation challenges through wraparound services delivered through the public workforce system and other initiatives (e.g., available and reliable transportation, development of more robust child and elder-care systems, relocation assistance) to remove barriers to employment.
79	Support policies that facilitate legal immigration to support economic development and help meet the region's workforce needs and population goals.
80	Support initiatives that grow the skilled workforce in Southeast Michigan, including upskilling, reskilling, and retraining.
81	Invest in internship, mentoring, apprenticeship, and career exposure programs in high-demand occupations to ensure secondary and postsecondary students are informed about career options.
82	Ensure that high school graduates have access to a variety of post-secondary educational training options, including four-year, two-year, and apprenticeship programs and other industry-recognized credentials to help prepare for career success.
83	Promote post-secondary education and lifelong learning to support long-term career success and opportunities in an evolving economy.

EDUCATION	
84	Stabilize funding for school districts by continuing to adjust for inflation and declining school populations.
85	Support programs that make post-secondary education affordable, including resources for non-traditional and part-time students maintaining employment.
86	Require all publicly funded schools to offer consistent programming and follow the same regulations for accountability and transparency.
87	Ensure that Michigan's K-12 school funding system adequately reflects the additional costs of educating students, such as those with special needs; those with counseling and mental health needs; those who are at-risk; or multi-lingual learners.
88	Ensure that every child has equal access to educational materials and technology – including adequate high-speed broadband service – inside the classroom and where they reside, to enable students to achieve their highest potential.
89	Provide high-quality instruction for every student through enhanced professional development opportunities for educators.
90	Develop a robust educator pipeline through fair compensation, promoting recruitment and retention, and alternative pathways.
91	Provide incentives for collaboration among K-12, community colleges, universities, and businesses, as well as labor and community organizations.
92	Ensure every child has access to high-quality early childhood programs.
93	Prevent the use of School-Aid Fund expenditures for Pre-K through 12 going to post-secondary institutions, while supporting a dedicated and stable funding source for post-secondary institutions.
94	Support efforts for establishing broader transfer and articulation agreements to provide students with credit for previous formal education, registered apprenticeships, military service, and applicable past learning.
95	Expand and strengthen the career guidance system (such as increasing the availability of career counselors and career navigators) to promote technical education and career pathways at secondary and post-secondary levels.
96	Promote and fund programs focused on the development of workplace skills and personal behaviors that foster long-term employment success.
97	Ensure adequate funding for wrap-around services to support K-12 student success, such as nutritional, no-cost school meals, counselors, and tutoring.
98	Protect the constitutional prohibition on State funding for vouchers, education savings accounts, and private school funding.
99	Encourage programs that adopt innovative strategies and provide professional support to engage parents and guardians of affected students to address the continuing challenges of chronic absenteeism, such as reliable transportation.
100	Ensure grant program requirements reflect and acknowledge the human element of educating students, including the diversity of career paths needed to support the region's economy.

NATURAL ASSETS

101	Advance a predictable, evidence-based regulatory framework for environmental programs that delivers measurable outcomes, provides implementation flexibility, and includes adequate funding, technical assistance, and realistic compliance schedules.
102	Support continued research and investment into carbon capture and storage technologies, and ensure the regulatory framework protects environmental and public health.
103	Support investments and programs that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and reduce exposure to harmful air pollutants and environmental contaminants, including through the development of locally designed, cost-effective strategies that attain and maintain the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS).
104	Support efforts and funding to encourage habitat restoration, invasive species management, and stormwater mitigation.
105	Ensure efforts to manage pollutants and nutrients in the Great Lakes through federal and State programs focus on primary sources and are not overly burdensome to local governments.
106	Support science-based monitoring, research, source control, treatment innovation, and implementation funding for PFAS, microplastics, pharmaceuticals, and other emerging contaminants.
107	Protect local governments and private property owners by requiring polluting parties to bear associated cleanup costs, including pretreatment of emerging pollutants discharged to public wastewater systems.
108	Support funding and technical assistance for large-scale climate-resiliency projects, including green infrastructure, urban forestry, and watershed restoration.
109	Seek opportunities to disincentivize out-of-state waste - especially hazardous waste - by adjusting state disposal fees to better align with regional rates.
110	Support funding, technical assistance, and implementation programs that help local governments and regional planning organizations carry out approved materials management plans, in conjunction with statewide programs to reduce waste streams to disposal sites and enhance recycling, without creating unfunded mandates on local governments and planning regions.
111	Support increased State and federal investment in local parks, including the acquisition, development, rehabilitation, and programming close to Michigan's major population centers.
112	Support efforts to close gaps in regional greenways and access to parkland that connect communities and expand outdoor recreation opportunities.