

February 13, 2015

RE: Weekly Policy Update

Municipal Clerk: Please forward a copy to all Governing Body Members Dear

Mayor:

Here's a recap of major policy issues of interest to local governments.

### **I. Transportation Trust Fund Update**

On Monday, the League joined key members of the Forward NJ Coalition to support efforts to replenish the State's vital Transportation Trust Fund (TTF) and to increase funding for local roads and bridges. Senate President Sweeney and Speaker Prieto have proposed a significant increase in TTF Local Aid funding - from the current level of about \$190 million, per year, up to \$400 million. For more on this event and the issue, please see the [League's February 10 letter](#) or the League's TTF action page at: <https://nj-njslom.civicplus.com/577/New-Jersey-Transportation-Trust-Fund>

### **II. A-3372 Requires certain parking garages to have on-site emergency vehicles capable of accessing low-clearance areas.**

The League of Municipalities **opposes** [A-3372](#), which was released by the Assembly Homeland Security and State Preparedness Committee on Thursday. This bill would require parking garages with vehicle height restrictions to have, on-site, emergency vehicles capable of accessing low-clearance areas.

The costs of acquiring, equipping, maintaining and securing such vehicles could be considerable. Regulations to be promulgated by the Commissioner of the Department of Health could add further costs to the mandate, and complicate current emergency response procedures.

For these reasons, we oppose the bill. We have asked that the nonpartisan Office of Legislative Services be directed to prepare a Fiscal Note on this new mandate. The legislation is now positioned for action by the entire Assembly. Please contact your Assembly representatives and ask them to oppose A-3372.

**Contact:** Jon Moran at [jmoran@njslom.com](mailto:jmoran@njslom.com) or 609-695-3481, ext. 121.

### **III. S-316/A-1739 Increases flexibility and available tools for municipal consolidations**

The League of Municipalities has reviewed and supports the current versions of S-316/A-1739, companion bills designed to facilitate municipal consolidations. The bills were released by the Assembly State and Local Government Committee on Thursday.

We want to thank the sponsor of S-316, Senator Robert Gordon, for his leadership on this issue, and for his consideration of some concerns we had with a previous version of this initiative.

These measures, which are opposed by some public employee unions, include a requirement for voter approval of a proposed consolidation. They include a requirement that State agencies consider local circumstances in making decisions regarding consolidations. Further, the legislation contains a provision that directs the Department of Community Affairs to provide an analysis of the fiscal impact of a consolidation proposal.

Our Legislative Committee strongly believes that the citizens need to have final say on a consolidation proposal and that they need to be given the information they need – including an independent fiscal analysis – in order to make an informed decision.

For that reason, we support S-316/A-1739. Final action in the Assembly would send this proposal on to the Governor. Please contact your Assembly representatives and ask them to support S-316/A-1739.

**Contact:** Jon Moran at [jmoran@njslom.com](mailto:jmoran@njslom.com) or 609-695-3481, ext. 121.

### **IV. Open Space Trust Fund Uses**

[A-3318](#), which expands definition of "acquisition," for purposes of county and municipal open space trust funds, to include demolition, removal of debris, and restoration of lands being acquired was released from the Assembly Agriculture and Natural Resource Committee on Thursday. Specifically, A-3318 would amend the definition of "Acquisition" or "Acquire", in the law concerning the establishment of county and municipal open space trust funds, to include the demolition of structures on, the removal of debris from, and the restoration of those lands to a natural state or to a state useful for recreation and conservation purposes. The League supports A-3318 as this amendment to the law would provide municipalities with greater flexibility in acquiring and preserving open space by permitting expanded use of their open space trust funds. The bill now heads to the full Assembly for consideration. The Senate companion, S-707, awaits consideration by the Senate Environment Committee. Please contact your Legislators and ask them to support A-3318 and S-707.

Contact: Lori Buckelew, [lbuckelew@njslom.com](mailto:lbuckelew@njslom.com) or 609-695-3481 ext. 112

## **V. Municipal Master Plan Element—Unfunded State Mandate**

On Monday, the Senate Environment and Energy Committee approved [S-2424](#), which would mandate "...a statement of strategy concerning smart growth, storm resiliency with respect to energy supply and environmental infrastructure, and environmental sustainability" be included as part of the land use element of the municipal master plan.

The League testified in **opposition** to this bill, which we consider to be an unfunded state mandate. Further the League noted that the optional elements under the Municipal Land Use Law, such as the utility service plan element, the conservation plan element and the green building and environmental sustainability plan element already allow the opportunity to municipalities to address resiliency, sustainability and "smart growth."

S-2424 now stands at 2nd reading in the Senate. The Assembly companion, A-4185, was introduced yesterday and referenced to the Assembly Environment and Solid Waste committee. Please contact your Legislators and ask them to oppose S-2424 and A-4185.

**Contact:** Mike Cerra, 609-695-3481 x120, or [mcerra@njslom.com](mailto:mcerra@njslom.com)

Thank you, Very truly yours,

William G. Dressel, Jr.  
Executive Director