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Summer 2021

**Look for treats on Pages 4, 5, 6, 8*

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Contact the SEMLM
brenda@semlm.org



From the Prez –

Like drinking from a fire hose

Isn’t summer for relaxing? Go to the park, go camping, grill hotdogs, make s’mores, burn the marshmallows ... Instead, there’s a huge amount of activity for cities now. We’re getting so much info about new programs, both state and federal, it’s not always easy to keep it clear.

To help our cities, the SEMLM has three hot topics for the July 29th SEMLM Summer event at the Stewartville American Legion. The first session is about the latest info on ARPA. Cities need further clarification on how their allotted ARPA funds can be used. We’ll find out what cities across the region are planning. It’s great to learn from one another at every SEMLM event.

The second hot topic is the new DEED Main Street Program recently announced. It’s not the same as either of two other Main Street Programs, which adds to the need for information. Getting these funds from DEED is a multi-step process. Cities need to understand where they fit in it, and what they can do to make the most of it for the region and for their own communities.

Yet another big topic that’s reached a critical stage is SE MN regional transit. Kasson’s City Council just had a presentation on the next steps for SE MN to get funding. Cities have a very big role in this, and we also gain a lot from having a transit system that is truly regional. We’ll cover this on the 29th, too.

The best part of our event will be spending time together again. I really miss visiting with all of you. The fun we have is one of the best parts of all our events. See you in Stewie on the 29th!

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 Kasson City Council

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Boardroom News

The SEMLM Board continued to meet virtually and work via email through late spring and early summer. It was decided to continue having online events for the spring, and to wait until June to decide how to handle the summer event.

The online April SEMLM event's first session was with SMIF staff regarding the role of cities related to Child Care as an Economic Development strategy and service to the community. The second session brought forward new information about current efforts to assess the regional transit options for SE MN. Without the system that was in place before COVID, the region is now left underserved and unserved. The entire event was recorded and posted to the SEMLM website for all to access.

The Board consensus for the summer event was to meet in person for the first time since January 2020. The Board was clear that ARPA needed to be a top meeting session, and left the second topic to be determined by staff. The roll out of the new DEED Main Street Program generated interest and questions from cities, and sparked the need for a session at the summer meeting.

During the interim, staff worked on the Wastewater Operator Training project with Riverland Community College, MPCA, and the regional Workforce Center. The goal is to have training provided in southern MN at Riverland Campuses.

Staff contacted several cities to get information on Public Works equipment categories for HSEM to use in the Public Works Resource online inventory project.

Staff also worked to keep SEMLM members informed of ARPA webinars and other state department programs for cities. A draft resolution related to Transit contributions from ARPA funds was created and shared with cities. This will be useful in the next weeks for cities.



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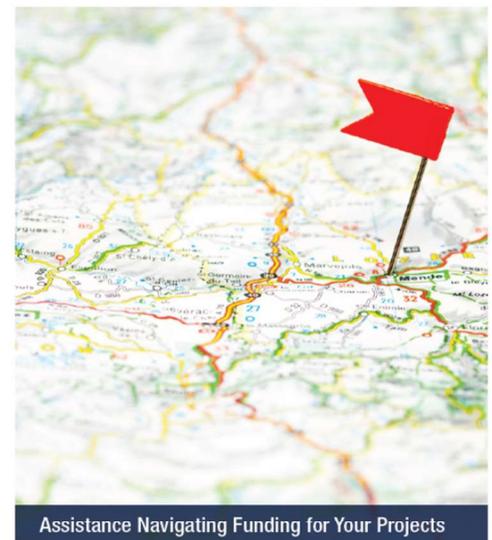
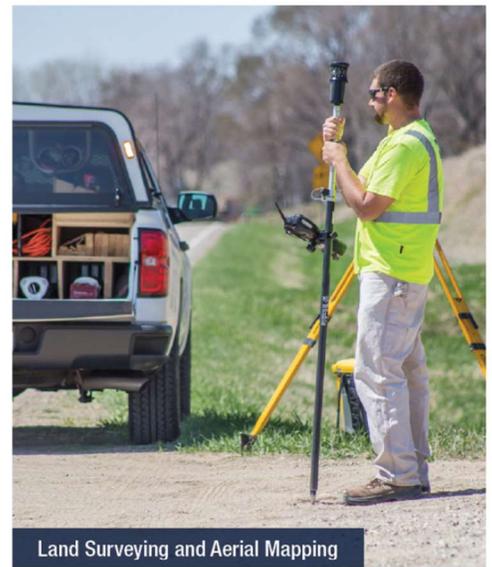


Something NEW

The SEMLM Summer event will be in person! After waiting a year and a half, it feels pretty new again to have a dinner meeting with our cities. The SEMLM Board and I miss seeing all of you, and hearing what's new in your cities. Come talk to us on July 29th! 😊

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City Trivia **Where is this building?**

City of Austin, 8.6 miles from City of Rose Creek



Wastewater Operator News

The SEMLM is working with MPCA, Riverland Community College, and MN Workforce Centers of SE MN to set up wastewater operator training courses at Riverland campuses (Austin, Albert Lea, Owatonna).

The program needs experienced WW operators who are able to teach and share their knowledge. Teaching materials come from MPCA, and will need your years of experience to make the topics real and useful for learners.

- **Have you been licensed and working for several years at the A, B, or C level?**
- **Do you like talking about your work, about how it gets done, about the details of doing the job well?**
- **Are you approaching retirement and looking for a lighter load to stay active in the field?**
- **Would helping new operators reach the next license level give you a sense of accomplishment, too?**

SE MN needs to increase the number of WW operators over the next several years to keep up with the number of upcoming retirements and relocations of current operators. Operators who train here are more likely to stay here.

If you have interest in being an instructor for this program, email brenda@semlm.org to learn more about it.

More info on page 12 of this issue.

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Sven and Ole work for the City Funny on 5

Lars, Sven, and Ole were having their morning coffee break at City Hall when City Clerk Lena came in to get her cup filled, and said, "Say, did you fellas know dat Einar Jorgenson passed away last night?" All agreed it was indeed sad news, and it also got them thinking.

Lena asked, "Ven you're in da casket, and da friends and neighbors are all around dere mourning you, vat vould you like dem to say?"

Lars said, "I vould like dem to say dat I vas a vonnerful snow plow driver, a fine fisherman, and a goot family man."

Sven said, "I vould like dem to say I vas a vonnerful hard verker, a servant of da town dat always mowed da parks so goot, and could tell a goot joke."

Ole said, "I vould like dem to say, 'Hey, look! He's moving!' "

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MN Perspective

Let's talk Minnesota dogs!



**No, not
those dogs.**

**Nooo, not
those dogs
either.**



Yes, that's it!

**Are we going to the dogs in
Minnesooooota?**

Yes, and the cats, too!

Sadly, there is no Minnesota census for pets. However, the American Veterinary Medical Service compiled estimates of pets per capita. Using those estimates, there are probably about 760,000 Minnesota households with at least one dog, and 633,000 households owning a cat or two or three or more ... and sometimes a cat lady.

-- Using CentralSquare in your city? --

For those of you who use CentralSquare billing for your cities, what compatible online payment system do you use with it? We have questions from some of our member cities about adding online payment as a service for their residents. They would like to know

- what online bill payment system you use that is compatible with CentralSquare,
- what your experience has been, and
- what you would recommend.

Email your info to brenda@semlm.org, and I will share with the group. If your city prefers to not have your name in the summary, just let me know. Our requesting cities may like to contact your city for details, and I can facilitate that.

Thank you in advance for sharing your experiences. This is a great thing the SEMLM can do for our group, find answers for a current question, and share the info with all cities who have a similar question.

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More information coming soon!

DiversityCouncil

CONTACT
INFO@DIVERSITYCOUNCIL.ORG

ONLINE REGISTRATION LINKS FOR
YOUR CITY WILL BE SENT IN AUGUST



Regional Transit in SE MN

From Brian Carlson of SEH, SE MN Transit Planning Project:

“After the presentation during the SEMLM April 29 meeting, the discussion of Regional Transportation Management Planning has continued to progress. SEMLM leadership and SE MN Together volunteers have met with cities and counties in the SEMLM area and received very positive response to allocate a small portion of ARPA funds to initiate this work.

The request for our SEMLM cities is to allocate \$2.50 per capita to start the process of creation of the Transportation Management Plan for the region. Additional information will be provided during the 7/29/2021 meeting in Stewartville or through contacts at SEMLM and SE MN Together.

Thank you for supporting this critical piece of community vitality for SE Minnesota!”

The recording of the 4/29/2021 SEMLM Spring Online Event presentation of this information is HERE: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1YfF1Eu7025lwJZGNXOOp2WC6E5uDw1AI/view>.

The Transit segment begins at the 46:00 time of the recording.

The sample transit resolution for your city is on pages 10-11 of this newsletter.

News from Mosquito Heights

Mayor Buzz is on his way to honor the town's oldest resident, Gnattily Drest, who is having her 100th birthday. She is in great health for her age and regularly walks to the market, post office, and the bank with no problems. Since she lives in Mosquito Heights, it's a big deal for the town.

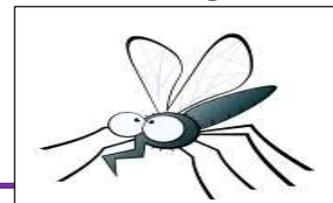
Mayor Buzz presents her with a badge honoring her as the oldest person in Mosquito Heights. There is also the local TV station doing a report for the evening news about her. Mayor Buzz decides to share the limelight by asking Gnattily a few questions while the camera rolls:

“What's your secret for the long and healthy life, Gnattily?”

“It's simple, Mayor,” she says, “Never in my entire life have I argued with another person.”

“Never argued? That's impossible!” says Mayor Buzz.

Gnattily replies, “You're right.”



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How the SEMLM works

1.

Member cities have at least one person representing their city attend quarterly meetings to share issues their community faces. This person can be an elected or appointed official, or a staff person.

2.

Cities can send a different person each time, the same person, or more than one person. Each city has one vote for any official action, no matter how many representatives it sends.

3.

Shared issues can become regional legislative policy positions to promote with area lawmakers, the governor, and state commissioners.

4.

Executive Board members maintain contact with legislators on regional priorities. Background information on policy positions can be provided in the form of "Talking Points" to assist lawmakers in promoting our members' positions.

CITY OF _____
RESOLUTION NO. _____

RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF Southeast Minnesota Regional Transportation Planning for the creation of the Transportation Management Organization for Southeast Minnesota.

WHEREAS, the 2018 Southeast Minnesota Economic Impact Forecasting Study identified Regional Transit as a significant issue for communities to encourage workforce participation.

WHEREAS, the southeast Minnesota region’s communities need transportation for Health and Human Services clients, employees in our regional businesses, employees and students in our regional education system, and employees and customers in our regional hospitality and tourism industry.

WHEREAS, the 2020 – 2021 Pandemic has brought changes in working from home and commuter patterns, and a discontinued regional commuter bus service.

WHEREAS, the economic outlook for southeast Minnesota forecasts a rebounding economy, an increased need for employees, and an increased need for regional transportation to address a much broader range of users, such as business employees and customers, students and faculty, medical workers, health and human services customers, hospitality and tourism staff.

WHEREAS, the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development’s current Inflow/Outflow data shows that communities in all eleven counties of southeast Minnesota have significant movement of people both in and out of their areas every business day.

WHEREAS, the 2021 Federal Stimulus Program allots federal funds to cities and counties to address the changing economic needs of their communities, including transit, and funds can be transferred between jurisdictions or to nonprofit partners as outlined in the sections below of H.R.1319 – The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 as it was passed on 03/11/2021 and became Public Law No: 117-2.

...
SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE. This Act may be cited as the “American Rescue Plan Act of 2021”.

SEC. 2. TABLE OF CONTENTS. The table of contents for this Act is as follows:

...
TITLE IX—COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Subtitle M – Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds.

SEC. 9901. CORONAVIRUS STATE AND LOCAL FISCAL RECOVERY FUNDS.

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—Title VI of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 801 et seq.) is amended by adding at the end the following: “**SEC. 603. CORONAVIRUS LOCAL FISCAL RECOVERY FUND.**

...
(c) **REQUIREMENTS.**—
(1) **USE OF FUNDS.**—

...
(3) **TRANSFER AUTHORITY.**—A metropolitan city, nonentitlement unit of local government, or county receiving a payment from funds made available under this section may transfer funds to a private nonprofit organization (as that term is defined in paragraph (17) of section 401 of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11360(17))), a public benefit corporation involved in the transportation of passengers or cargo, or a special-purpose unit of State or local government.

...

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY OF _____, MINNESOTA, AS FOLLOWS:

The _____ City Council supports participating as a contributor to the Transportation Management Organization for Southeast Minnesota with a contribution of \$_____ of the city's allotted 2021 Federal Stimulus funding.

Adopted by the _____ City Council on _____.

Approved:

(Signature area)

Wastewater Training in Southern Minnesota

Southeastern Minnesota League of Municipalities

- Convening planning process
- Information gathering from all sources necessary
- Outreach and communication with cities across all of southern Minnesota
- Identify needs in next five to ten years
- Identify obstacles to overcome and options

Riverland Community College

- Three campuses centrally located for all of southern Minnesota
- Already offering city training for other departments
- Assist in recruitment through career counselors, course catalog, faculty
- Source curriculum for both in-person and online classes
- Experience in working with state departments and requirements

Southern MN Workforce Centers

- Multiple locations across southern Minnesota
- Recruitment using MPCA materials and video
- Work to offer state assistance to fund training for workers who come through the Workforce Centers programs
- Experienced with state programs for additional assistance

MN Pollution Control Agency

- Guidance for accreditation of training programs
- Information on other MPCA training in state
- Recruitment materials and video for use in all possible ways needed in southern MN
- Supportive of SEMLM regional efforts

“Excellent visionary decision if they can get this rolling. Agreed - most of this formal schooling at a vocational level vs 4-year degrees is up north or in the metro area. Crookston and St Cloud come to mind. This would be a valuable opportunity to support.”

Bill Daley
Water/Wastewater Superintendent
City of Lake Crystal

In recent years, more cities have identified the need for closer training options for wastewater operators and more recruitment. The SEMLM is making progress in bringing this to cities at Riverland Community College (Albert Lea, Austin, Owatonna campuses). A sustainable program needs enough people using it, which makes a location central to all of southern Minnesota important.

This concept targets people of all ages who want to get their initial licensing, and upgrade their skills and license over a period of time, at a location convenient for their schedule and lifestyle. This will be for people new to the field, and others already in it. It's for people who have time for training, but don't have the desire or time to travel far or make overnight trips.

A separate project in Marshall, MN targets people who want a certificate program. The organizer for the Marshall program is very supportive of what we are doing with Riverland. He sees it as filling a need that their program will not. These are not competing or overlapping projects in his view, and that's good to know.

For the Riverland program, trainees can come from

- **Workforce Center interactions,**
- **People seeking community college career counseling and course catalogue information that leads to career discussions and perhaps city visits,**
- **Existing city wastewater personnel ready to get licensed or upgrade their license,**
- **Other city Public Works staff interested in moving into a wastewater career who decline to travel a distance for training, and will only train if they can stay in the region for it.**

Life gets more complicated as people start a family or have multiple jobs and schedules. We see a lot of that in our smaller cities, and accommodating them will make it possible for more of their people to get training, and reduce the travel expenses for cities.

Cities identified the needs, and the SEMLM is working on how to meet those needs for all of southern Minnesota.



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We're not horsing around

It's time to start thinking about January 2022.

In January, the SEMLM will adopt legislative policies, the talking points and legislative action plan used by your SEMLM Board members and staff to serve the cities of our region.

- **Your city votes on this as a member of the SEMLM.**
- **You decide what bills and legislative positions you want promoted at the Capitol.**

Your city can request a bill or other legislative action be taken on an issue that's important to your community, and the SEMLM members can vote to support your city's request.

That brings the voices of over 80 cities to stand with you and your city.

**If it's hard to be heard at the Capitol,
having 80+ cities with you really helps.**

Send your ideas on legislative needs for your city and the region to brenda@semlm.org.

We need to get started.

Save the Date:

September 29th

You'll be in Austin, MN.

**It's like there's a
crystal ball
in my laptop**



telling me you'll be there.

The picture's getting clearer.

I see you laughing.

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What's HOT in Stewartville



A BIG Project with MNDOT

MNDOT is replacing the Hwy 63 north bound and south bound bridges over I-90. The project includes constructing and expanding interchange ramps and installing a new cable median barrier. If you have not seen this lately, it's impressive. The completion date is scheduled for yet in 2021.

Comp Plan Update – Public survey is key to participation

Mayor Jimmie-John King and councilpersons Craig Anderson, Brent Beyer, Jeremiah Oeltjen and Josh Arndt all approved the public participation plan.

Cheryl Roeder, city clerk, wrote a memo to the City Council stating the new plan will be designed to create a vision for city of Stewartville for **2042**.



Summer Meeting
Thursday
July 29, 2021
5:30 – 9:00 pm
Stewartville American Legion
 1100 2nd Ave NW,
 Stewartville, MN 55976
 Directions: <https://tinyurl.com/2m5sumac>

5:30 pm Social Time with cash bar

6:30 pm Dinner - Prepacked meals per person. Choice available when registering online. Registration info will be emailed and available on the SEMLM website www.semlm.org.

Welcome from our host City of Stewartville

7:00 pm **SEMLM Business – President Egler, City of Kasson**

7:15 pm **ARPA Funding**

- What are the latest updates on eligible uses, or non-eligible ones?
- What restrictions should cities know about?
- What options are there for cities that want more leverage for their allotted funds?
- Can cities move their funds to another organization for specific purposes?

7:45 pm **City Discussion on ARPA Funding Plans**

Share and learn how SE MN cities plan to use ARPA funds

8:00 pm **DEED’s new Main Street Program**

- With several new DEED programs for cities, is it not always clear which one fits the needs or projects for your city?
- What projects does the Main Street program target?
- How does your city apply? Does your city need to create what DEED calls a ‘partner organization’, or can another entity fill that role?
- Would it help to have a regional entity serve as the ‘partner organization’ for multiple cities, or perhaps serve all cities in the region?
- Could we have more than one regional entity apply for funds to come to SE MN communities through this program?
- What info can our group provide to help SE MN partner organizations succeed in receiving DEED Main Street funds for cities in our region?

8:58 pm **Closing remarks - SEMLM President Egler.** Adjourn meeting.

9:00 Open time for networking and socializing –

Meet our new member cities. Continue the conversations. Ask more questions. Enjoy more time with our SEMLM cities, it’s been such a long time since we could get together.



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Telecommuting during COVID-19: How does it shape the future workplace and workforce?

The University of MN needs your help with a [research project](#) funded by the MN Department of Transportation. Focused on telecommuting before, during, and after the COVID-19 pandemic, the project includes a [worker survey](#) and an [employer survey](#). The **worker survey** asks about individual employees' experience with telecommuting during and before the pandemic, their employers' plan for telecommuting (or not) in the future, their demographic characteristics, and a few questions about the employer. The **employer survey** mirrors the worker survey as much as possible, but from an employer's perspective.

If you are able to help distribute the employer survey to business owners and other types of employers, and the worker survey to working-age adult MN residents -- that would be much appreciated by the University Transportation study group!

Project summary: During COVID-19, many employers asked their employees to telecommute, in order to comply with stay-at-home orders. In fact, a number of businesses, both in the U.S. and other parts of the world, have decided to allow employees to telecommute permanently (if employees choose to do so). This is the first time in history that we are witnessing a temporary shift of a large portion of the workforce to telecommuting. We argue this unprecedented time provides a unique opportunity to assess the impact of telecommuting. Telecommuting relates directly to transportation demand and pattern, congestion mitigation, population migration, as well as the sustainability, livability, and prosperity of communities. Therefore, many government agencies, including those of transportation, have inherent and long-term interests in understanding the impact of shifting the workforce to telecommuting. The objective of this research is to assess the impact of temporarily shifting the workforce to telecommuting on: (1) workplace policy changes and support related to telecommuting, (2) population migration as individual employees react to the temporarily shift to telecommuting and subsequent workplace policy change, and (3) differences among geographic areas, employer sizes, and industry types. The project will employ a mixed-method approach, by using both focus groups and surveys. The researchers will conduct focus groups with employers and human resource professionals, to generate in-depth data related to telecommuting. Focus group outcomes, insights from past literature, and suggestions from MnDOT and the TAP will inform the development of the employer and worker surveys. The two surveys will generate data on the impact of telecommuting on productivity as well as future workplaces and the workforce, from the perspectives of both employers and workers. This research will immediately benefit transportation agencies in Minnesota, by providing data-driven, evidence-based insights for both short- and longer-term transportation planning and congestion mitigation on both state and local levels.

Sponsor: [Minnesota Department of Transportation](#)