



Fall 2021

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Contact the SEMLM
brenda@semlm.org



From the Prez – 2022 on the Horizon

Groups like ours have to think ahead all the time. Redistricting is going on right now, and the next legislative session begins on January 31, 2022. That’s only a couple months away! The SEMLM Board needs your thoughts on what our organization should be talking about with all the state lawmakers in our region.

I think you will see city services related to public safety in the spotlight for legislative discussions for SE MN in 2022. Fire and ambulance services are struggling to keep and recruit volunteers. Their issues are alike in some ways, but not in all ways, so each needs to be addressed separately. What they have in common, besides the need for more people, is their importance to our residents’ safety. Cities provide many services, but the ones people depend on in emergencies are a top priority.

What other topics do you and your city see as important for legislative discussions in 2022? Now is the time to share those with the SEMLM Board. We want to hear from you.

If you can participate in one or more of the SEMLM online small group sessions, that is an excellent way to share what’s important to your city. If you prefer to send your input by email, send it to the Board at brenda@semlm.org. A handy input sheet is in this newsletter, and you can use that to create your email, or just wing it and send a description of your topic. We want to hear from you, and we will be glad to get it in any of these formats.

It’s not too early to get these things on the table for 2022! I’m looking forward to your input and ideas.

SEMLM President Dan Egler
 Kasson City Council

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Boardroom News

The SEMLM Board is very keen to get as much city input on their top issues for 2022 as possible. With the ongoing pandemic, and new funding programs, it's very important to know what cities need to make the most of their current options, and what is still not being addressed.

This may be a good time to deal with city service issues that have become ever more challenging for providing service to our residents. **The Board would like our SEMLM cities to share this opportunity for input on legislative topics with your fire and ambulance departments.** Your fire chiefs, fire department training leaders, ambulance directors, and ambulance training leaders can contact brenda@semlm.org with input on what **training requirements** could be streamlined without reducing the safety for the crews and residents, and what **incentives** can attract more people to serve.

We need to brainstorm on this as a region. Many cities are struggling to keep their current fire and ambulance crew numbers. Some cities have had to eliminate ambulance service, and transfer their call area to neighboring cities, which puts more pressure on remaining crews nearby.

As a region, we need to identify potential strategies to keep our emergency services strong and safe. Keeping our fire and ambulance crews fully staffed needs to be balanced with sufficient training for them. When training requirements become overly burdensome and deter new and existing members from serving, that reduces safety. Let's also look at the incentives for serving on these important service teams.

Our local city leaders are more likely to come up with good solutions than something mandated from the state. Send your ideas and ask your emergency services to do the same: brenda@semlm.org



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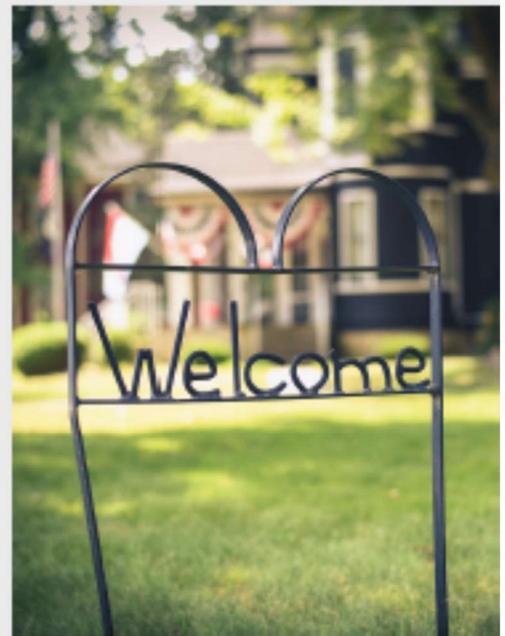
The SEMLM Board will have open board seats to fill in January 2022. Current openings can be for both elected officials or staff.

You'll work with some of the brightest people in the region, sharing ideas, and learning much to bring back to your own city. It's good for all when you serve the region.

Ready? Page 16 awaits you.



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City Trivia

Where is this??

Ellendale, Minnesota sits 15 miles south of Owatonna. Named for the wife of C.J. Ives, a railroad president. Ellen Dale was a friend to all who worked the line. A beautiful, prosperous little village, named for the kind and thoughtful Ellen.
– *Info courtesy of the City of Ellendale.*

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Wastewater Training Update

The SEMLM is working with MPCA and Riverland Community College for wastewater operator training courses at Riverland campuses (Austin, Albert Lea, Owatonna). SE MN needs to increase the number of WW operators over the next several years to keep up with upcoming retirements and relocations of current operators. Operators who train here are more likely to stay here. Once the WW program is in place, the plan is to add Water training, too.

Riverland and SEMLM are looking at the expected cost to fully develop the WW core curriculum, and the best way to fund curriculum development. We are fortunate to already have contacts from some very talented individuals willing to teach. It will require several people to staff the courses, so **we encourage more of you who could step up as instructors to contact us at brenda@semlm.org.**

- **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?**

If you have interest in learning more about being an instructor for the wastewater training program, email brenda@semlm.org.

More info on page 12 of this issue.

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Sven and Ole work for the City

Funny on 5

It's late fall, and Ole is trying to explain to Sven, the city's new hire from Norway, the type of winter to expect in Minnesota. Ole, a great city crew member, makes some comparisons.

Ole says, "Vell, ya know, Sven, ven it hits fordy below, an' dat Hollywood bunch goes crazy, da Minnesoooota folks yust rent some videos. Now, ven it's sixdy below, and dat dere Mt. St. Helen's freezes, dat's ven da Girl Scouts here sell dere cookies door-ta-door. An' ven it hits a hunnert below, even Santy Claus goes sout' for da season, but Minnesooootans yust pull down dere earflaps an' check da snowblower."

"Ven it starts gettin' really colt, say like a hunnert an' seventy below, dat et'yl alcohol ve use here at da city vill vanna freeze, but dem Minnesooootans, dey yust keep verkin' to t'aw da keg."

"Now, ven it gets really colt, say four hunnert an' fifty below, dem scientists say all da atomic motion stops, but not here! Dat's ven Minnesooootans are askin', "Cold enough for ya?"

"And belief it or not, ven it's five hunnert below, an' even Hell freezes over, don'cha know dat don' make da folks here sad vun bit. Nope, cuz here dere too busy a hootin' an a hollerin' 'bout dem Vikes vinnin' da Super Bowl!"



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**** UPDATE ****

Public Works

Resource Sharing Software

Progress is being made!

The online search tool to connect cities with each other to share resources for emergencies (including those not covered with MNWARN), planned city projects, and joint city projects is moving forward.

Our SE MN Homeland Security and Emergency Management (HSEM) Regional Program Coordinator, Michael Peterson, ran into issues getting the product to work as it should for it to be fully useful as a search tool. He's currently working with other HSEM staff and the WebEOC vendor to get this product to come to life. HSEM supports this effort, and Michael is very enthused to see this go into action for cities. We are very fortunate to have a regional HSEM advocate for us on this.

Michael really went to bat for us with HSEM to move this project forward.

Thank you, Michael!

More details for our tech folks ☺

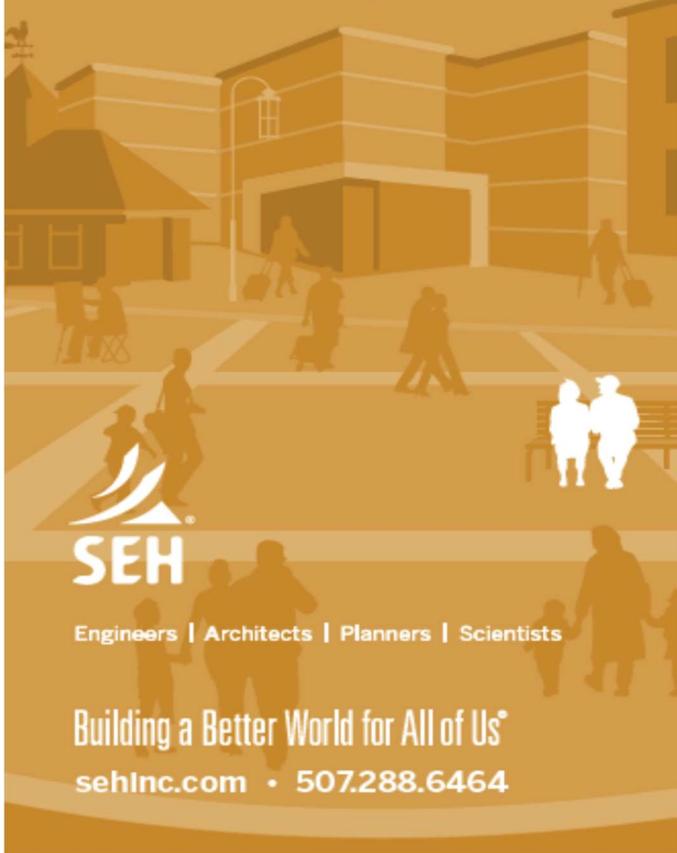
From Michael - The information board is created, and information can be entered along with the appropriate contact and jurisdiction information. Once inputted, it's then searchable. Michael says the next issue to resolve is the drop-down boxes for selecting the equipment. This is important so that the equipment is all named the same, which makes it possible to have accurate searches to find the correct items.

This isn't Michael's regular type of work, but that did not stop him from promoting this project, jumping in to work on it, and requesting specialized assistance from HSEM to get it done. Without his effort, this project would not exist.



Let's show the world what
we can do together.

Day by day. Project by project.
Together we're building better places
that bring the world closer.



Shaping
the future,
one project
at a time.

Working with communities to build
what's next in infrastructure.

Forge ahead.

\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$ Update from Treasury Department \$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$

Regarding uses for COVID related funds (ARP, CARES Act)

The Treasury Department updated their FAQ page for COVID funds on November 15th, and it's available here: <https://home.treasury.gov/system/files/136/SLFRPFAQ.pdf>

This has a LOT of info, and it covers both the ARP and CARES Act programs. It's actually helpful to have both covered in the same document, with comparisons made between the programs. Even though it is long, it sure beats going back and forth between two separate documents trying to decipher the differences.

These FAQs are often the best and most useful tools for figuring out whether uses are allowable. It gets into more detail on permissible uses for the funds, and addresses other questions raised by city and county officials. If you still cannot find info that addresses your needs, send a more specific note about your question(s) to brenda@seilm.org, and I will try to get you what you need. 😊

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SE MN Regional Transit Planning Progress

SE Minnesota Transportation Management planning continues moving forward with municipalities and counties who have supported this planning effort. In addition, private enterprise has also stepped up to offer planning expertise and financial resources to take the next steps in creating a **Transportation Management Organization** for the region.

WE STILL NEED YOUR HELP & SUPPORT! As indicated in earlier SEMLM newsletters, communities should plan to set aside \$2.50/capita from Federal Stimulus funds as an initial investment to help in this planning effort. As confirmed in earlier clarifications from LMC and SEMLM staff, this assignment of federal funds is wholly within the jurisdiction of your community to set aside this funding allotment for this purpose.

Resources for your city:

- 1) Brian Carlson of SEH is available to speak with your city council, city leaders and administrative staff about your participation in this key planning effort. Brian can be reached at 507.272.2797 or bcarlson@sehinc.com.
- 2) A support resolution for regional transit planning for SE MN is included on the next page (page 10) for use by your city council, EDA, Chamber of Commerce, or other Economic Development entities.

News from the City of Mosquito Heights

Mayor Buzz loves to tweet the official school district delays and snow day announcements. Administrator Jimmy winces every time, knowing Mayor Buzz will pull another prank on the kids. @MayorBuzz Hey, hey, listen up... Mosquito Heights Public Schools are .. xaghsfhnkkl..

Students' replies:

@MayorBuzz omg, not this again

@MayorBuzz WHYYY YOU DO DIS

@MayorBuzz please just tell us!

@MayorBuzz Why, again, aren't you Governor?

@MayorBuzz every. Single. Time.

@MayorBuzz plz let there be no school!!!!

@MayorBuzz yea, I hate it when I smash my face on my keywgcgdxtuvvibitzphnlhcsgslb

@MayorBuzz Alright, alright enough!! Mosquito Heights Schools ar

@MayorBuzz crying

@MayorBuzz when I get back from peeing you better have an answer man...

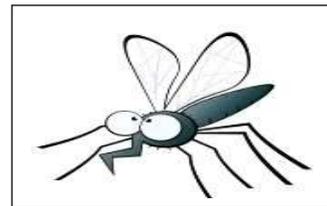
@MayorBuzz YOU'RE THE REASON I HAVE TRUST ISSUES!

@MayorBuzz I swear -,- tell us PLEASE!!!!

@MayorBuzz UGHHHHHH do you enjoy putting us through this pain?

@MayorBuzz come on man, I needa know soon so I can plan my sleepover

(These are based on actual quotes from a mayor and students. Every mayor should have such fun!)



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.

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)



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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.

Background on 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.



You're almost there.

Your next big opportunity is so close now.

You will be very glad you did this, and so will your city.

See page 16.



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Does your city need more horsepower at the Capitol?

The SEMLM can help.

Use the next page in this newsletter to share the needs of your city and our region with the SEMLM for inclusion in the 2022 SEMLM policy packet for all SE MN legislators and the Governor's Office.

The SEMLM works with all the area legislators as a non-partisan organization for our cities' benefit and for the region. The SEMLM builds relationships in St. Paul to get our issues heard, understood, and addressed.

The SEMLM takes SE MN to the Capitol.



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Legislative Policy Input for 2022

Please fill out and send to brenda@semlm.org or SEMLM, P.O. Box 413, Chatfield, MN 55923. Use additional pages if needed. Send any additional topics or documentation as well.

Thank you for sharing your thoughts. We look forward to hearing from you and your city.

Name and Position:

City:

Email:

Phone number:

Topic Title: _____

Description of issue:

Topic Title: _____

Description of issue:



SEMLM Board Application

(Attach additional sheets as needed.)

Please send your completed application by mail or email to:

Brenda Johnson, SEMLM Exec. Dir.

P.O. Box 413

Chatfield, MN 55923

brenda@semlm.org

Name

Email

Phone

Address

Relevant Experience or Employment (attach a resume if relevant):

Why are you interested in serving on the SEMLM Board?

Area(s) of expertise and contributions you feel you can make:

Other volunteer commitments:

This research is going on right now.

Please share this with your local businesses for them and their employees to participate. UMN appreciates your help. Results will be shared with our region.

<https://www.cts.umn.edu/research/project/telecommuting-during-covid-19-how-does-it-shape-the-future-workplace-and-workforce>



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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](#)