City of Aurora, Colorado

FEDERAL PRIORITIES

2022
The COVID-19 outbreak and associated economic hardships have resulted in an increase in homeless counts in the city. This has forced the city to reevaluate homeless programs and provision of services. To that end, the city supports measures that provide additional funding for the homeless population to shelter in non-congregant shelters including vacant motel and hotel rooms, and alternative sheltering options such as safe outdoor spaces, tiny homes, and pallet shelters.

The city supports the following principles to be included in the annual fiscal year (FY) Transportation/HUD Appropriations bill or future Congressional legislation to combat the economic effects resulting from the COVID-19 outbreak.

- Investments in programs providing permanent housing for people experiencing homelessness.
- Increase in funding for the CDBG and HUD Emergency Solutions Grant Programs.

The economic effects of the COVID-19 outbreak has forced many businesses to curtail their activities or shut down entirely causing many millions to lose their employment. Housing assistance is a critical measure to prevent additional renters and homeowners from falling into homelessness.

The city supports the following principles to be included in the annual fiscal year (FY) Transportation/HUD Appropriations bill or future Congressional legislation to combat the economic effects resulting from the COVID-19 outbreak.

- Private Activity Bond Financing Program - lower the threshold of required Private Activity Bond financing which would free up more funds for affordable housing projects and allow states to fund nearly twice as many affordable housing developments.
- The 4% Low-Income Housing Tax Credit - The Low-Income Housing Tax Credit is a primary tool to produce and preserve affordable housing. However, the requirement that at least 50% of such projects are financed by tax-exempt bonds limits access to the 4% tax credits for the rehabilitation of affordable housing, greatly reducing the number of affordable housing produced. The City of Aurora requests the minimum threshold of tax-exempt bonds needed to receive an automatic 4% Low-Income Housing Tax Credit award be lowered from 50% to 25% to increase the rehabilitation of affordable housing.
- Housing Choice Vouchers - The City requests an expansion of the housing choice vouchers program which would sharply reduce homelessness, housing instability, and overcrowding.
- Investments in housing and development programs including rental vouchers and mortgage assistance programs to prevent individuals and families from falling into homelessness.
- Increase in funding for the CDBG and HOME Programs.
- An increase of the HUD maximum income restrictions for the down payment assistance and the rental assistance program in order to stay relevant in the current market.
- Programs that preserve housing for extremely low-income households, including those that address chronic homelessness among veterans, youth, and families.
- Raise the Davis-Bacon project threshold to $250,000 for non-residential and increase the CDBG housing unit threshold to 12 units to coincide with the HOME program.
- Eliminate the 15% set-aside of HOME funds for Community Housing Development Organizations (CHDOs).

The city of Aurora requests Congress and federal agencies support the following:

- The Eviction Crisis Act (S. 3030), sponsored by Senator Bennet of Colorado
- The Housing is Infrastructure Act (H.R.4497)
Police reform continues to be a priority area for the City of Aurora. The city has been proactive on reforms inside their own department and the State of Colorado has passed needed reforms in recent years, but the city believes federal legislation is needed.

The city supports the following principles to be included in future congressional legislation surrounding police reform.

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<th>Subject</th>
<th>Measures to increase the integrity and accountability of law enforcement Congress</th>
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- **Justice for Breonna Taylor Act** - The Justice for Breonna Taylor Act introduced in the U.S. Senate would prohibit no-knock warrants, which allows law enforcement officials to forcibly enter a home without announcing their authority or purpose. The city supports this legislation.
- **National Ban of Chokeholds** – The city supports a national ban of the use of chokeholds, carotid holds, sleeper holds or similar techniques by law enforcement.
- **National Database** – The city supports the creation of a national database to track officer wrongdoing.
- **Failure to Intervene** – The city supports legislation that would create a national standard to hold police officers accountable in a situation where they fail to intervene to prevent another officer from using excessive force.
- **Eliminating Mandatory Minimum Prison Sentences** – The city supports legislation that would end mandatory minimum prison sentences for non-violent drug offenses.
- **Ending Civil Asset Forfeiture** – The city supports legislation that would end civil asset forfeiture by law enforcement.
- **The city of Aurora supports legislation that strengthens the training methods and tactics throughout law enforcement jurisdictions, especially regarding de-escalation of force and the duty to intervene, providing law enforcement with new funding to do so.**
## INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT

| Subject | Efficient Permitting for Water Infrastructure Projects  
Congress, U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, and Army Corps of Engineers |
|---------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

A challenge to creating essential water infrastructure projects is obtaining the necessary permits. Permitting can take decades with associated costs often becoming unnecessarily burdensome. It should not take decades to analyze alternatives and render a decision. The U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, and the Army Corps of Engineers have all delayed analyses and decisions on Aurora’s requests due to lack of staff expertise and staff time. Aurora has current requests with each of these federal agencies that are all beyond a reasonable timeframe for a decision, and the agencies are again telling Aurora Water that the delays are due to lack of federal agency staff time. Congress needs to ensure that the Federal agencies are adequately staffed. The ability to hire third party consultants is helpful, but even that work needs to be reviewed by agency staff. Processing permitting

### Request

The city of Aurora respectfully requests additional streamlining (including adequate funding and staffing) of U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, and the Army Corps of Engineers processes to permit water supply and watershed health projects in a timely and efficient manner.

| Subject | Support for Healthy Forests  
Congress, U.S. Forest Service, Fish & Wildlife Service, and Army Corps of Engineers |
|---------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Aurora’s water supplies originate in the headwaters of three major basins within Colorado and include portions of the Arapahoe-Roosevelt, Pike-San Isabel, and White River National Forests. Protecting Aurora’s watersheds is critical to the success of Aurora Water’s mission to enhance and protect the quality of life for Aurora’s residents by providing safe, dependable, and sustainable water services. Aurora’s municipal water supplies have suffered greatly as a result of forest fires and subsequent floods and debris flows. The passage of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021 (IIJA) is a great step forward in securing needed funding to carry out prevention, mitigation and restoration in our forests. However, Aurora remains concerned that unnecessary limitations in the permitting processes will hinder our ability to implement infrastructure and processes necessary to ensure healthy forests.

### Request

As requested above as part of our permitting request, increased legislative support ensuring adequate staff resources for our federal agencies is necessary to enable the agencies to carry out mandates provided in the IIJA. It is imperative to solve staffing issues and create efficiencies within federal agencies if we are to succeed in protecting and/or restoring our forests and watersheds.

| Subject | Federal Leadership on Climate Change Studies, Planning, and Adaptation Abilities  
Congress, Department of Agriculture, Department of Interior, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and Environmental Protection Agency |
|---------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Routinely, at least one area of the Aurora Water System is experiencing drought and reduced water supplies in any given year. Climate change (or global warming) is increasingly impacting water availability. Statistical trends show this continuing through increasing hydrological variability with impacts to quantity, quality, and reliability of future water supplies. As planning efforts continue on local, regional, and national scales, Aurora Water supports federal agencies’ collaborative and integrative approach in yielding the best science and prediction tools. Along with improving accuracy of hydrological and weather system prediction tools and technologies, Aurora Water is interested in promoting efficient energy use, increasing water storage capacity (both surface and underground), and further expanding reclaimed water projects to maintain a reliable drinking water supply. The city of Aurora supports collaborative, affordable approaches to local, regional, and national water resource quantity, quality, and reliability planning and implementation efforts.

### Request

The city of Aurora requests additional federal staffing and funding for weather and climate prediction technologies and research. agencies if we are to succeed in protecting and/or restoring our forests and watersheds.
It is expected Congress will initiate an effort to list several PFAS (Perfluoroalkyl Substances) chemicals, more specifically PFOA and PFOS, as hazardous compounds under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act or CERCLA. Doing so could place both drinking water and wastewater utilities in a bit of a quagmire when it comes to disposal of waste products produced as part of their treatment processes. Both drinking water treatment and wastewater treatment facilities produce solids as part of their treatment processes that, more often than not, contain some level of contaminants that were present in the water sources prior to treatment. Due to the ubiquitous nature of PFAS compounds in the environment, the solids produced from these treatment processes are likely to contain some level of PFAS through no fault of the drinking or wastewater utility. The compounds simply accumulate in the solids as a result of the process to clean the water. These solids are often disposed at landfills or put to beneficial use and land applied. If a landfill, where these solids are disposed, were to become a superfund site and listed on the national priorities list due to PFAS contamination under CERCLA, drinking water and wastewater utilities could be liable for a portion of the clean-up costs even though they were not responsible for the original contamination. These costs could be in the tens of millions of dollars and would have to be passed along to the rate payers.

The city of Aurora supports CERCLA and the need to clean up environmental contamination, but requests Congress to include an exemption from liability for water and wastewater utilities in any legislation that lists PFAS as a hazardous substance under the Act.

The passage of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) will provide an influx of funds to restore and repair transportation and infrastructure services in communities. The city will closely monitor the implementation of grant programs. These include the Bridge Grant Program ($3.265 billion), the FRA Railroad Crossing Elimination Program ($3 billion), and the Safe Streets and Roads for All Grant Program ($1 billion).

Additionally, the city will compete for federal funding administered by state organizations through existing formula programs for important projects. These include mitigating congestion on critical freight corridors through the National Highway Freight Program ($7.15 billion) and expanding city EV fleets through the Surface Transportation Block Grant Program ($72 billion). Finally, systematic development of the city’s Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan and accompanying funding to prioritize projects will continue to be a priority as the city seeks to improve alternative transportation modes.
The passage of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) will provide an influx of funds to expand broadband access and services throughout the country. The City should advocate for and leverage these funding opportunities in the following areas:

- The City has a need for broadband infrastructure to support many city operations and functions. The Public Works department needs to provide new, better connectivity between the traffic signals used on the road network. This will support newer technologies such as Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS). Additionally, all City buildings currently use carrier-provided services for basic data connectivity and internet access to support their operations. Deploying city-owned broadband will support these current and future needs while positioning the City to support Smart City initiatives at a later date. The City should consider partnering with the CBO or directly applying for funding to build out a portion of this infrastructure within high traffic arterials.

- The City currently provides free WiFi access to the Community at some city facilities. As the City builds fiber connectivity as noted above, the City can interconnect libraries, recreation centers, and community centers along the path of the fiber as it is being built. This will allow the City to expand access to free WiFi at all those facilities. This free access can help underserved or unserved members of the community gain access to digital services such as telehealth, tele-education, job aids, career building services, pay their bills online, and access digital government services. A portion of the funding should be used to provide dedicated devices such as computers or tablets at those locations to serve the community members who have do not have one. A portion of the funds will also be necessary to bolster the City’s internet backbone and WiFi access devices to enable these services.

- The City should consider utilizing some portion of the funding to provide digital literacy services. Some members of the community have limited or no experience with modern digital services, such as those enumerated above. Dedicated instructors and/or online instruction courses can be provided on a scheduled basis to help community members update resumes, apply for assistance, attend digital career fairs, and any number of other services that are offered through the modern world wide web.

- A Federal program, the FCC’s Affordable Connectivity Program, provides assistance to low-income households in the form of a monthly stipend to defray the costs for high speed internet access, as well as a one-time stipend to purchase a laptop, desktop or tablet. If similar opportunities arise using state funding, the City should consider advocating for said funds to make broadband access more equitable across the community.
The passage of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) has dedicated a portion of funding to help state and local governments implement or improve specific cybersecurity tools and capabilities. Importantly, the funding can be used to address cybersecurity needs for critical infrastructure, such as water, wastewater, traffic control systems, and public safety systems.

**Funding**

- The City should leverage the available funding to further improve our cybersecurity posture and capabilities.
- Additionally, the City should consider advocating for additional funding sources for ongoing sustainability and expansion.
- The City should consider advocating that funding be more discretionary, allowing individual communities to define what their cybersecurity needs are and apply for the funding to meet those needs. Typically, funds targeted to local entities are administered by the state Department of Homeland Security / Emergency Management, and the Urban Area Security Initiative. Traditionally these two groups have defined appropriate use for the funds.

**Governance**

- In the FY 2022 omnibus appropriations bill (H.R.5471) signed into law on March 15th, 2022, the Federal government included cyber incident reporting requirements. Under the law, critical infrastructure entities will be required to report cyber incidents to the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Agency (CISA) within 72 hours occurrence, and ransomware events within 24 hours. CISA has up to 24 months to issue an NPRM that will promulgate rules defining what constitutes a cyber incident, which entities are defined as critical infrastructure, what is required within the reporting, and may take further action if entities fail to comply. CISA will then have an additional 18 months after the NPRM to finalize their rules. The City should actively monitor for the issuance of the NPRM and participate during the initial comment period and potentially with any reply comments as appropriate.
- The City should continue to monitor for further legislative proposals that would impose regulations or requirements related to the reporting or handling of cyber activities and incidents.
The Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program allows some individuals with unlawful presence in the United States after being brought to the country as children to receive a renewable two-year period of deferred action from deportation and become eligible for a work permit in the U.S. Expansion of this program will increase wages, improve health and well-being, reduce the number of households living in poverty, and add stability to the lives of DACA-eligible immigrants.

The Dream Act of 2021 would allow immigrant students without lawful status who were brought here as children and grew up in the United States to earn lawful permanent residence and eventually American citizenship. Recipients must meet a number of criteria including: coming to the U.S. as children and are without lawful status; graduating from high school or obtaining a GED; pursuing higher education, working lawfully for at least three years, or serving in the military; passing security and law enforcement background checks and pay a reasonable application fee; demonstrating proficiency in the English language and a knowledge of United States history; and having not committed a felony or other serious crimes and do not pose a threat to our country. This bill would finally give certainty to more than 26,000 Coloradans who are eligible for DACA.

The city of Aurora requests the Colorado Congressional delegation to support the following legislation:
- Improving Opportunities for New Americans Act (H.R. 4928/S. 3470) sponsored by Congressman Crow of Colorado.

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The city of Aurora requests the Colorado Congressional delegation to support the Dream Act (H.R.6/S.264)

The Temporary Protected Status program was created by a bipartisan act of Congress in 1990. This status, afforded to nationals from some countries affected by armed conflict or natural disaster, allows persons to live and work in the U.S. for limited times. The DHS has ended crucial protections for immigrants from six countries. Over 300,000 people are at risk of losing legal protected status, including more than 3,000 Salvadorians in Colorado.

The city of Aurora requests the U.S. DHS to renew and extend this program in 2022.
Support Buckley Space Force Base and the associated economic development in Aurora
Congress and Department of Defense

The city of Aurora is home to Buckley Space Force Base (SFB), serving more than 100,000 active duty, National Guard, Reserve, civilian, and retired personnel throughout Aurora and the surrounding community. The Base hosts the Buckley Garrison, a unit of the U.S. Air Force Space Command, as well as the Colorado National Guard 120th Fighter Squadron. Since its establishment in 1943, Buckley Air Force Base has served a critical role in the economic vitality of the city of Aurora. In the face of budget cuts and a potential base realignment and closure (BRAC) process, one of the city’s highest priorities is the support of the ongoing mission of the Base.

Toward that end, the City supports the Defense Community Infrastructure Program, created in the FY 2020 National Defense Authorization Appropriations bill, which provides critical funding for off-base but adjacent community infrastructure projects that are key to supporting the Buckley mission.

**Request**

The city supports the following principles related to Buckley AFB:

- The city of Aurora asks the Colorado Congressional delegation to continue support of Buckley Air Force Base in the FY 2023 Defense Appropriations Bill and assist in directing future missions to the base.
- In addition, the city of Aurora seeks support for future requests of the Defense Community Infrastructure Program as the city protects the viability of the Base’s operations and defense capabilities.
In May of 2014, the City Council approved the licensure of retail marijuana establishments throughout the city of Aurora. The Council authorized 24 retail marijuana store licenses, with four licenses allowed in each of the six Council wards. However, the use, possession, and sale of cannabis remains a federal crime. This conflict in federal and local marijuana laws has made it difficult for legitimate recreational marijuana businesses to access basic banking services. With financial institutions hesitant to provide services to cannabis businesses, the industry has become cash reliant, creating public safety issues and the potential for money laundering to become more prevalent.

The city of Aurora asks the Colorado Congressional delegation to lift the illegality of banking services to the cannabis industry. Toward that end, the City asks for Congress to support the Secure and Fair Enforcement Banking Act (H.R. 1595) that would prohibit penalizing a bank for providing financial services to a legitimate state-sanctioned and regulated cannabis business.

The Aurora City Council and city management have developed a vision of growth for the city that focuses on the principles of sustainability, energy efficiency and renewable energy. To demonstrate its commitment to sustainability principles, the city adopted the theme of sustainability in the update of its 2009 Comprehensive Plan. Toward that end the city supports legislation and funding that incentivizes carbon capture, use, and storage; advances alternative fuels; advances energy storage technology; improves energy efficiency; modernizes infrastructure; builds and supports community resilience; and seeks to lower carbon dioxide emissions.