

Date: January 12, 2023

To: The I-35W Solutions Alliance Board of Directors

From: Rob Vanasek and Britta Torkelson

Re: Legislative Report

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The 93<sup>rd</sup> Session of the Minnesota legislature convened on Tuesday January 3<sup>rd</sup> at noon. The Senate Majority has changed hands after a half dozen years in GOP hands. There are now 34 DFLer and 33 GOP members, which is the exact opposite of where we were 6 years ago. The House DFL Caucus increased their majority by one to 70 seats. The House is currently made up of 70 DFLers and 64 Republicans. In the 143 member house 25 Rs are new. 22 Ds are new or returning. This creates a historic high of 35% of new house members. Hundreds of years of experience were lost from last year to this year. Former 35W Solutions Alliance Board member Andrew Carlson is no longer in the House but former Solutions Alliance Board member Nathan Coulter was just elected keeping our board's alumni of actively serving legislators at 3.

Melissa Hortman of Brooklyn Park remains Speaker, but the House has a new Majority Leader in Jamie Long, Minneapolis. The new House Minority Leader is Lisa Demuth of Cold Spring. The new Senate Majority Leader is Kari Dziejdzic of Minneapolis and Mark Johnson of East Grand Forks is the new Minority Leader.

Reproductive Rights, paid family leave, childcare and a couple other priorities like child care and SF 27, which allows drivers licenses to be applied for by immigrants (SF 27 was heard yesterday in the Senate Transportation Committee) are top priorities. Transportation in the form of "roads, bridges and transit" are one of the other priorities of the new majorities.

For the first time in 10 years, the DFL party has control of the House, Senate and governor's office. Speaker Hortman has said you know what to expect from us as we've passed many bills of the floor and they have died in the Senate but that will change.

**Key dates in 2017:**

**January 24:** The Governor releases his budget plan

**Mid-March** – unofficial, but I expect first committee deadline on March 17<sup>th</sup>, St. Patrick's day and an aggressive 3<sup>rd</sup> committee deadline will likely be April 4<sup>th</sup> that creates a short legislative break in 2023.

**May 22:** Adjournment at midnight as constitutionally required

**June 30:** Last day of the fiscal biennium. (To avoid a state government shutdown the state legislature and governor need to agree to a new two year budget by the end of June if they haven't finished their work in the regular session.

**Transportation Committees**

The House has continued to have one Transportation Committee led by Chair Frank Hornstein.

The members of House Transportation Finance are:

Chair Hornstein, Minneapolis	Brand, St. Peter Elkins, Bloomington	Murphy, Underwood Nelson, Brooklyn Park
V. Chair Brad Tabke, Shakopee	Fogelman, Fulda Hudella, Hastings	Olson, Fairmount Sencer-Mura, Minneapolis
Republican Lead, John Petersburg, Waseca	Koegel, Spring Lake Park Kraft, St. Louis Park	

The Senate Transportation Finance and Policy committee also remains combined:

Chair Dibble, Minneapolis	Carlson, Eagan	Howe, Rockville
Vice Chair, Morrison, Minnetonka	Hawj, St. Paul Lang, Olivia	McEwen, Duluth
Republican Lead Jasinski, Fairbault	Port, Burnsville Coleman, Waconia	

### **What's down the road?**

Dibble, Hornstein and Walz might have created the most robust transportation package in 15 years but due to the large surplus it may prove surprisingly difficult for DFLers to dedicate money for transportation funds when they have so many interests jockeying for the General Fund surplus. Of the almost \$18 billion in surplus according to the November forecast, only 5.6\$B is ongoing funds that can be spent in the future. \$12 B of that is one-time funds that might be used in place or in addition to bonding projects.

The Governor's budget will focus this very green legislature and the transportation components of his budget will provide cover for the current legislature to act if it is robust.

### **Train wrecks?**

We know the House will be moving bills early and often, while the Senate continues to get organized with their new majority. Many of the more rambunctious House GOP members moved over to the Senate and have already caused some abnormally long Senate floor sessions. The Senate will continue to move relatively slow while the House is expected to be very productive legislatively. Given the tight 34-33 margin and the challenge of keeping every last majority member together in the Senate, many expect a rough path forward in the Senate and we remain skeptical, yet hopeful on big progress in meeting the needs of transportation infrastructure across the state. The upside is that if there are advance made in 2023, the metro will not be short thrifted as we have expericed too often in the last decade.