

2026-2027 MTA legislative policy platform



As adopted by delegates at MTA's Annual Meeting on April 23 during MTA's Annual Conference & Expo at the Grand Traverse Resort in Acme Township (Grand Traverse Co.), these policies are the platform from which legislation is sought in the coming year.

Vision Statement

The Michigan Townships Association envisions local governance where:

- Townships have statutory authority and state financial support sufficient to provide fiscal stability, high-quality services and infrastructure consistent with community needs and expectations, and to enable full compliance with mandates without cutting local spending priorities
- Elections are accurate, secure and fair, and a high percentage of registered voters participate
- Local control is respected by state lawmakers as townships work to solve local and regional challenges through collaboration, strategic foresight and ethical leadership
- Natural resources are utilized in a manner consistent with township regulations that ensure sustainability and leverage value as public assets
- There is clarity of roles and responsibilities for township officials essential for efficient and effective services to the public
- Townships retain authority to protect and regulate the public rights-of-way and other land uses in the interest of the public
- State laws affirm that township officials are elected by and accountable to their residents for the township's governance, finances, programs and services consistent with community values

Assessment and Taxation

The Michigan Townships Association supports local control over property assessment, advocates for state reimbursement for tax exemptions, and works to ensure townships have the resources for sound valuation and resilient, fiscally healthy communities.

As lawmakers and regulators enact changes to current tax laws and local government requirements, the Michigan Townships Association supports the following objectives:

- Require large retail properties (big box stores) to be valued using the same methods as all other commercial properties and prohibit the use of deed restrictions or covenants intended to artificially reduce property value or limit market competition
- Require the state to administer and fund the disabled veterans' property tax exemption
- Oppose new or expanded property tax exemptions without replacement of lost local revenue
- Limit property tax exemption eligibility for nonprofit charitable purposes
- Allow townships to create special assessment districts for infrastructure needs

- Raise the current charter township 10-mill tax limitation to allow charter townships, with voter approval, to address legacy costs, meet demands for expanding services and offset millage rollback requirements
- Clarify in statute that assessors are accountable to the township board when the supervisor is not certified to perform assessing functions
- Increase the specific tax on mobile homes located in licensed parks and levy on park owners rather than individual occupied dwelling owners
- Exempt minimal personal property tax obligations resulting from minor property improvements on mobile home lots such as small decks, stairs and porches
- Allow option for a local excise tax for the purpose of providing public recreational facilities and/or public safety expenses related to increased tourism

Elections

The Michigan Townships Association advocates for fair, transparent, efficient and secure elections administered by township officials that encourage high voter participation.

As lawmakers and regulators enact changes to current election laws, the Michigan Townships Association supports the following objectives:

- Preserve the authority of townships to convey information on ballot proposals to their residents
- Preserve the authority of townships to place millage and bond proposals before voters at any election
- Allow the township board and their electors to approve nonpartisan elective township offices
- Require state funding for the statewide replacement of voting equipment
- Require continued funding for the operations of state election requirements
- Require election challenger training

Environment and Land Use

The Michigan Townships Association supports state laws that empower townships to efficiently and effectively plan for land uses and adopt zoning ordinances to protect the public health, safety and general welfare. State and federal regulations should promote and reinforce local growth and development policies and objectives. Local authority is a fundamental component of land use decisions that must be protected. The Michigan Townships Association will work to minimize preemption of local decision-making and retain local authority as an essential part of land use decisions.

As lawmakers and regulatory agencies enact changes to laws addressing township land use and environment, the

Michigan Townships Association supports the following objectives:

- Preserve local authority on zoning issues that are local in nature to ensure protection of public health and safety and property values
- Ensure any statewide sanitary code requirements adopted reduce septic system failures that create public health threats and expose townships to liability for costly public sewer systems
- Preserve landfill capacities by directing appropriate materials to waste utilization facilities and support a state tipping fee competitive with nearby states while preserving a local tipping fee option
- Increase state funding and support for environmental programs to address issues such as water quality, brownfield redevelopment, contamination and invasive species
- Ensure that any heightened review of environmental permits for communities overly impacted by environmental degradation protects public health and allows for local development goals to be met in a timely manner
- Ensure that the state retains the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency-delegated authority to issue wetlands and other water permits
- Ensure that the definition of Waters of the United States, subject to permitting processes of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Army Corps of Engineers, is not extended to non-navigable waters such as roadside ditches and culvert installation and maintenance

Intergovernmental Relations

The Michigan Townships Association supports township officials having the discretion to resolve policy issues that are manifestly local in nature. MTA also supports state laws that encourage intergovernmental collaboration to promote economic prosperity and to deliver programs and services efficiently and effectively. State laws should allow creativity and flexibility, and incentivize fair and equitable cost-sharing benefits and governance in interlocal agreements. State laws authorizing economic development tools and other powers should be based on community characteristics relative to policy objectives. State taxation and spending policies should mitigate adverse revenue impacts on townships.

As lawmakers and regulatory agencies consider altering the fiscal relationship of the state to local governments as well as powers and authorities of local governments, the Michigan Townships Association supports the following objectives:

- Guarantee statutory revenue sharing for all townships through a dedicated state revenue source
- Restore revenue sharing funds lost due to the removal of sales tax at the pump
- Ensure state laws allow township officials to solve local issues in a manner consistent with local values, priorities and needs rather than impose a one-size-fits-all approach
- Guarantee full funding to townships for payments in lieu of taxes for state-purchased lands, commercial forest lands and swamp tax/tax-reverted properties
- Ensure a local government consolidation process continues to require voter approval

Township Operations

The Michigan Townships Association supports state and federal governments granting townships broad discretion and autonomy to govern the funding and delivery of programs and services. MTA also supports state reimbursement to townships for increased costs resulting from new mandated services and state regulations.

The Michigan Townships Association supports the following objectives:

- Permit members of a public body to participate in a public meeting remotely
- Allow public notice requirements to be met by posting the required notice on the website of the public body
- Clarify and strengthen the governance role of township boards to establish policy direction and manage operations for their community
- Enact appropriate, cost-effective training requirements for township planning commissioners and zoning board of appeal members to reduce costly lawsuits and improve township decision-making by key appointed boards
- Grant township supervisors permissive authority to perform marriages

Transportation and Infrastructure

The Michigan Townships Association advocates for state funding to ensure that county primary and local roads are safe and convenient for travel. As townships are major financial contributors to infrastructure needs, the Michigan Townships Association supports planning, funding and delivering infrastructure needed for every community to be economically viable and to protect the health, safety and general welfare of residents. The Michigan Townships Association supports a strong partnership between local, state and federal officials to establish long-term reliable funding necessary to create and maintain infrastructure and improvements.

As lawmakers and regulators address pressures to better address Michigan's infrastructure, the Michigan Townships Association supports the following objectives:

- Modernize and increase funding for local roads and increase state funding for water, sewer and communications infrastructure
- Allow a county road agency in conjunction with a requesting township to lower the speed to a level deemed necessary for motorist or pedestrian safety on a gravel or unimproved surface road
- Urge state and county road funding agencies to provide funds for local road construction and utilize allocated funds for maintenance projects
- Ensure that any alternative funding proposals to the gas tax to help fund transportation infrastructure incorporate the practicalities for all communities
- Expand engineering and safety data to include pedestrian-vehicle impact data and multiple modes of transportation to properly manage speed limits