



2020 NATaT Federal Platform



Adopted by the NATaT Board of Directors on March 17, 2020

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Federal Priorities for the 116th Congress

Infrastructure Priorities

Transportation

- Towns and townships do not receive federal transportation funding unless they are recipients of a competitive grant award. However, they are responsible for maintaining a large percentage of roads in their respective states. NATaT supports efforts to ensure local roads in our communities receive a portion of the state’s Surface Transportation Block Grant Program funds.
- NATaT supports preserving the current 15 percent set-aside for off-system bridges and any other programs that direct additional funds to our nation’s bridges.
- NATaT supports streamlining and shortening the federal permitting process for transportation projects while still requiring environmental stewardship.
- NATaT supports the Administration’s priority for funding projects in rural areas through its competitive grant programs. However, NATaT wants to ensure that the federal Department of Transportation understands the reality of the current “rural” definition, which is an area that is outside an urbanized area with a population of over 200,000. To our nation’s towns and townships, 200,000 is not “rural.”
- As Congress reauthorizes the FAST Act, NATaT wants to ensure that any effort to impose vehicle miles traveled fees considers the limited transportation options for rural residents and the resulting need to use their vehicles to access work and daily services.
- NATaT opposes efforts to increase the national truck weight limit on the federal highway system, and efforts to allow longer, wider double- and triple-trailer trucks on federal highways.

State	Road Miles Managed by Towns/Townships	% of Federal Funds
Minnesota	39%	<1%
Illinois	53%	<1%
Ohio	34%	<1%
Pennsylvania	64%	<1%
Wisconsin	54%	<1%
New York	50%	<1%
Michigan	66% of the state’s roads are in townships and managed by counties; townships reimburse counties 50-100% of that cost.	
		0%

Broadband and Telecommunications

- NATaT supports efforts to ensure that all households have access to high-speed broadband with a primary focus of deployment in non-urban, rural areas where access is the most limited.
- NATaT supports satellite internet programs that can provide universal access to broadband.

- NATaT supports the Administration and Congress as they prioritize increased funding for broadband deployment. However, NATaT wants to ensure that our unserved and underserved areas remain economically viable by requiring a minimum, affordable speed of no less than 25 Mbps/3 Mbps (download/upload).
- NATaT supports efforts to improve broadband mapping. Current broadband maps are inadequate and do not accurately depict broadband service.
- NATaT supports efforts to streamline deployment *without* preempting local control over local siting decisions and time to review applications – tenets of a community’s right to self-govern.
- NATaT opposes FCC proposed rules that would permit cable operators to reduce their franchise fee payments by the fair market value of their non-cash “in-kind” contributions (e.g., use of cable facilities or equipment).
- NATaT supports the efforts of the Rural Broadband Caucus in both the House and Senate to facilitate discussion, educate Members of Congress, and develop policy solutions to close the digital divide in rural America.

Volunteer First Responders

NATaT supports Congressional efforts to establish incentive programs to recruit and retain volunteer first responders. Volunteer firefighters alone save communities of all sizes \$129 billion a year, and represent 71% of all firefighters in the U.S. Of the total number of volunteer firefighters, 95% service communities with a population of 25,000 or less.

- NATaT supports the Volunteer Responder Incentive Protection Act (VRIPA) that would provide small tax incentives to volunteer first responders. These incentives were included in the 2019 year-end spending package, but only for one year. VRIPA would make the tax incentives permanent.
- NATaT supports the Volunteer First Responder Housing Act that would expand existing federal housing assistance programs to qualified volunteer first responders.

Federal Funding

- Census population counts have major implications for how a large portion of federal dollars are distributed to states and local governments, as well as for congressional redistricting. In addition to securing sufficient federal funding to ensure an accurate 2020 Census, NATaT supports efforts to improve response rates by allowing paper, electronic, and telephone responses, in addition to canvassing.
- NATaT supports efforts to control federal spending but supports increased, or at least level funding for those federal programs that promote local economic development, create jobs, and generate tax revenues to all levels of government. They include: USDA’s Rural Development programs; FEMA’s State and Local Programs, particularly Fire Act Grants; and Economic Development Administration programs.

- NATaT supports budget allocation policies that are fair to towns and townships. A disproportionate amount of federal program dollars are directed to larger metropolitan communities, such as federal transportation and community development funds. While those communities have significant needs, so do our nation's smaller communities. Allowing smaller local governments to access funding directly, and in the same manner as large municipalities, will enhance job creation and economic development in communities throughout the country.

Tax Priorities

- NATaT supports preserving the tax-exempt status of municipal bonds that have helped build public infrastructure for more than 200 years. These bonds enable state and local governments to access necessary capital for critical infrastructure projects. NATaT also supports reinstating advance refunding bonds to allow a community to refinance a municipal bond and maintain the bond's tax-exempt status.
- NATaT supports the efforts of the House Municipal Finance Caucus as a forum to discuss the opportunities and challenges for local governments to fund initiatives that strengthen our communities, and to advocate for bipartisan policies that enhance our access to the capital markets.

Unfunded Mandates and Federal Preemption

- NATaT strongly supports legislation that would require the federal government to provide adequate and necessary funding sufficient to implement and administer any mandate imposed on local government.
- NATaT opposes federal government involvement in issues that should be resolved at the local level by elected public officials who are closest to the people affected. The federal government should limit its involvement in issues such as personnel matters, land use decisions, economic development, and delivery of local government services, and give local elected officials maximum flexibility in selecting the best options to achieve local priorities.
- NATaT supports a common-sense review and re-write of the EPA's pending "*Waters of the U.S.*" rule without unnecessarily expanding the jurisdiction of the Clean Water Act.
- As mentioned in the "Broadband" section of the platform, NATaT supports preserving long-standing local zoning authorities in the deployment of emerging technologies, like small cell 5G. That authority is essential to protecting the safety of our residents.

The National Association of Towns and Townships (NATaT) is the voice for more than 10,000 towns and townships across the country seeking to enhance the ability of smaller communities to deliver public services, economic vitality, and good government to their citizens. America's towns and townships seek to partner with the federal government to ensure that public laws, policies, regulations, and resources support our role in fostering local democracy.

There are approximately 39,000 units of local government in the United States. Of that number, 85 percent serve communities with less than 10,000 people and nearly half have fewer than 1,000 residents. Approximately one quarter of all Americans live in rural areas, roughly the same percentage as live in central cities. NATaT was formed more than 40 years ago to provide those smaller communities a strong voice in Washington, D.C. NATaT's purpose today, as it was then, is to champion pro-town and -township federal initiatives and to promote legislative and regulatory policies designed to strengthen smaller units of local government.

NATaT has developed a proactive federal agenda to ensure that the needs and interests of the nation's smaller communities are reflected in all major federal statutory, regulatory, funding, and policy decisions made in Washington. NATaT is eager to work in collaboration with the other local government associations, the Administration, and Congress to achieve these goals.

NATaT members include town and township officials represented by the following state associations:

Township Officials of Illinois

Michigan Townships Association

Minnesota Association of Townships

Association of Towns of the State of New York

North Dakota Township Officers Association

Ohio Township Association

Pennsylvania State Association of Township Supervisors

Wisconsin Towns Association



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