

ST PAUL

AREA CHAMBER

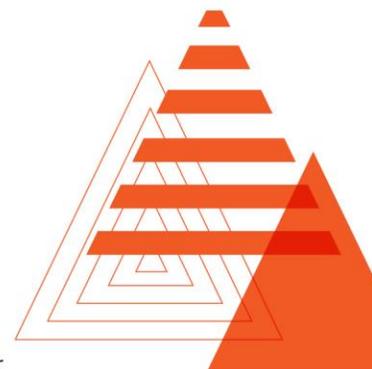
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MAKING CONNECTIONS THAT COUNT

St. Paul Area Chamber Advocacy Areas of Focus, 2021

Economic Vitality
Infrastructure, Transit, and Transportation
Talent Development and Retention
Environmental Sustainability



How Our Values Shape Our Advocacy Areas of Focus

The St. Paul Area Chamber leverages the collective voice of employers on behalf of sustained improvement in economic vitality for all, and business success in particular, across the region.

SPAC's commitment to our members is to ensure that business voices are heard in a broad array of policy issue debates at all levels of government. We actively engage with elected officials, providing them with accurate and trustworthy information, advancing our initiatives, and sharing the employer perspective on policy considerations. We are a legitimately non-partisan organization and conduct our interactions to reinforce that position. Relationships at all levels of government are not just a priority, they are critical to our work.

We view the following areas of focus with the ultimate goal of advancing equity and exemplifying inclusion in all advocacy conversations, capitalizing on our diversity as a strength of the region. We advance this work because we understand that equity is the only growth model for an "all-in" community. This is the future for business growth.

We believe in giving businesses the tools they need to tackle challenges in a way that works for them, for their employees, and their customers. We believe in public policies that preserve the rights of private employers, and give business the predictability necessary to encourage innovation, creative disruption, and imaginative solutions to challenges. We believe in market-based solutions to problems.

We believe in frank dialogue and early engagement, and that the public, private, and charitable sectors all have a role in building a prosperous region. We commit to working together and strive for a division of duties and respect for expertise that rewards what is working and avoids duplication of efforts.

We believe that community livability is an ongoing priority. A thriving region requires that businesses and residents alike do well. We pledge to do our part and support our public sector partners in their delivery of essential services -such as public safety and infrastructure. The growth of our economy relies on the improvement of both. Support for our government partners also means encouraging the kind of land use and growth of the tax base that pays for the services that only government can or should provide.

We believe in the regionality of our economy. We acknowledge the differences between and respect individual municipalities and commit to work together to create an environment which cultivates growth at a regional level and doesn't stop at city borders.

Economic Vitality

The best contributor to a strong economy is a healthy business climate. SPAC advances public policy that supports the rights of private employers to make decisions based on what is important to their employees, their customers, and their stakeholders. SPAC encourages our public sector partners to engage in truly participatory planning and encourages participation by and/or representation for businesses at decision-making tables.

Areas of Focus:

- Support policies that promote strategic considerations around land use:
 - Emphasize the importance of a diversified tax base across the region.
 - Advocate for no net loss of industrial land.
 - Emphasize the importance of industrial and commercial land use in job creation and increased tax base.
 - Support policies that advance transit-oriented development.
 - Track policies that would impact key regional economic development projects (Opportunity Zones, Ford, RiversEdge, Hillcrest, Rice/Larpenteur, Maplewood North End, Rice Creek Commons, etc.).
- Support policies that increase access to opportunities for minority- and women-owned businesses.
- Support policies that invest in innovation. This includes “soft touch” regulations for emerging markets and industries, and those that incent investment in tech and innovation sector companies.

Infrastructure, Transit, and Transportation

High quality and reliable infrastructure is central to economic growth. Increased investment in transit and infrastructure is an economic imperative if the Twin Cities metro is to remain competitive with peer regions. The deteriorating condition of our roads and bridges and increased traffic congestion have economic, safety, and competitiveness impacts. SPAC supports equitable access to transit and the additional jobs and housing options that mobility affords.

Areas of Focus:

- Lead advocacy efforts on East Metro transit projects: Riverview Corridor, the Gold Line (Gateway) Corridor, and the Rush Line Corridor.
- Partner on advocacy work for transit projects that improve connectivity throughout the region.
- Support a sustainable, predictable, and comprehensive funding mechanism for regional transit and infrastructure.
- Support a sustainable, predictable, and comprehensive funding mechanism for upkeep and safety enhancements on roads and bridges.
- Support a sustainable, predictable, and comprehensive funding mechanism for multimodal commercial transportation network, including rail and river, to address capacity expansion, and maintenance/capital improvements of these assets.
- Support policies that encourage transit-oriented development and density to support affordability across the region.

Talent Development and Retention

The availability of a skilled Workforce continues to be an essential tool for business growth today. SPAC supports public policies that accelerate efforts to help employers attract and retain employees, while also allowing those same employers the flexibility to meet the needs of their companies and employees.

Areas of Focus:

- Support public policies that provide resources and connections for students and workers looking for new career opportunities: promote trades, apprenticeships, post-secondary options, as well as re-entry opportunities for veterans, parents returning from childcare roles, and formerly incarcerated individuals.
- Support the coalition advocating for a state preemption law, ensuring uniform labor standards across Minnesota, to eliminate confusion and unnecessary work for employers across different jurisdictions.
- Support K12 engagement and policies designed to close the opportunity gap and improve student performance.
- Support Paid Family Leave policies that are designed through truly participatory business engagement and that make the most sense for employees and employers.
- Support initiatives that promote affordable health care and health insurance options that meet the needs of our business community.
- Support federal immigration policies as pertains to the attraction of professionals to our market, that recognizes the needs of our economy, protects national security, and are humane, including DACA, and access to visas and green cards. Successful reform will modify immigration policies without creating more obstacles for workers to connect with employers and vice versa.
- Encourage public policies and innovative solutions that address childcare availability, affordability and accessibility, to lower barriers for workforce participation.
- Support practical and flexible options for upcoming and innovative workplace structures and employment options ("gig economy," freelancers, contract work, etc.) that employers and employees both want.
- Support initiatives and priorities targeting the quality and accessibility of housing. Support planning and funding for facilities, services, and housing as part of a long-term strategy to address homelessness.

Environmental Sustainability

Public policies to address climate change already are being debated and enacted at multiple levels of government. SPAC supports sensible regulations that advance sustainability while allowing for economic growth to continue. Business must be at the table to effectively solve these issues.

Areas of Focus:

- Support an innovative energy system that balances cost effectiveness and reliability, while integrating renewables and new technologies that customers and the market require.
- Track climate change legislation and participate in engagements where appropriate. Empower employers with appropriate information to make informed decisions specific to their business.