COVID-Related Best Practices on NYCOM's Website
NYCOM's recent survey of local practices and policies responding to COVID-19 has produced an informative listing of actions our members are taking to deal with the public health and governmental challenges they are facing. We will continue to update this listing as we observe or receive additional local responses to this public health crisis. Please copy NYCOM's David Bissember (david@nycom.org) on any news releases or distributions of new policies you issue.

We have restricted access to the document so that only NYCOM members who log-in to the website as a member will be able to see it. Therefore, if you have log-in credentials, click on "Member Login" in the upper right hand corner when you first arrive on NYCOM's website (www.nycom.org). If you are on a mobile device, you will have to click on the "hamburger menu" (the three stacked horizontal lines) to find the Member Login button. If you don't have login credentials, please email Norma Sheehy (norma@nycom.org) and she will provide you with the necessary information.

City and Village Best Practices Guide

Local Aid in Federal Stimulus Bill
Late yesterday the Senate, House and President reached agreement on the third stimulus/recovery bill in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The U.S. Senate has unanimously (96-0) approved the bill and the House of Representatives is expected to vote on the bill on Friday. Thank you to the many city and village officials that weighed in with Senator Schumer, Senator Gillibrand and your Member of Congress in our fight to maximize the amount and number of recipients of local aid.

Ultimately and unfortunately, negotiators would not budge and kept the 500,000 population threshold in order for a municipality to receive a direct share of the $150 billion included for a state and local government Coronavirus Relief Fund. There is no requirement that states share any of their allocation with local governments under 500,000 in population.

The bill also provides for $5 billion via a Community Development Fund, to be allocated by HUD within 30 days of enactment of the bill, as follows:

- $2 billion for direct allocation to states and local governments through the regular Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) formula whereby 70% is for entitlement cities and counties, and 30% is for the states (all grantees that received a CDBG entitlement allocation in FY20 will receive this funding); to put this amount in perspective, the current funding level for CDBG is $3.45 billion;

- $1 billion to states based on a new formula (e.g., public health needs, number of coronavirus cases, etc.) and from which states will allocate to entitlement and non-entitlement municipalities; and

- $2 billion for direct allocation to state and local governments via a new formula to be developed by HUD (prioritizing risk of transmission of coronavirus, number of cases compared to the national average, and economic and housing market disruption resulting from coronavirus); the funds will
A few additional items of interest included in the stimulus bill:

Byrne Justice Grants: $850 million, to be awarded using FY 2019 formula allocations to prevent, prepare for, and respond to the coronavirus. The legislation specifies that the funding shall not be subject to the restrictions and conditions imposed on awards in FY 2018 that forbid interference with federal law enforcement.

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA): FEMA receives $45.4 billion for response and recovery, including $400 million for grants for fire/ems, emergency management, and food & shelter providers.

Economic Stabilization Fund: $454 billion that permits the US Treasury to purchase obligations, including those of States and local governments, thus permitting the Federal Reserve to participate as an institutional investor in securities that mature in greater than 6 months. This fund also provides loans and loan guarantees to small businesses.

Economic Development Administration: $1.5 billion to support economic development for states and communities suffering economic injury as a result of the coronavirus.

NYCOM thanks the National League of Cities and U.S. Conference of Mayors for their lobbying efforts and their assistance in informing this update. We will provide you with a more detailed summary of the stimulus bill once it receives final passage by the House. Also, it is important to note that it is highly likely there will be at least one more stimulus bill passed by Congress in the coming weeks and NYCOM will be emailing all mayors to get their approval to be included on a sign-on letter to President Trump, congressional leadership, and New York's delegation requesting additional direct federal funding to all local governments in New York.

State Budget

Information on the 2020-21 State Budget has been trickling in slowly as the State Legislature left last week and has not yet returned to the Capitol. During his press conference this morning, the Governor acknowledged that -- as a result of COVID-19 and the failure by Congress to address the needs of New York State in the federal stimulus bill -- the State will pass an initial budget next week, and then adjust revenue and spending throughout the year, which he suggested may result in mid-year reductions to local governments and school districts. We will need our entire membership to strongly oppose such an action.

Here is NYCOM Executive Director Peter Baynes's statement on such a suggestion:

"Mayors certainly empathize with the difficult budget choices facing the state, as they themselves are confronting similar challenges. However, we urge state leaders to avoid pushing the state's problems down to already stressed and revenue option-limited local governments. Let's not forget, cities and villages have not only been short-changed for the last 11 years while others benefited annually from growth in the state budget, they have also already done their part during past economic crises, and for which they were never made whole. Mayors will continue to work collaboratively with the Governor as he leads our state through these unprecedented times, including joining with him in the fight for a sufficient level of federal funding for our state and our local governments."

As negotiations continue, our advocacy team has been communicating with legislators of the Legislature on key issues including discovery reforms, prevailing wage, E-bikes and E-Scooters, adult-use cannabis, as well as the siting of small wireless facilities and renewable energy projects.

As you may recall, right before the State Legislature left town, we sent every member a letter strongly encouraging them to focus on initiatives that would help local governments such as discovery reform, and not on policy issues that would not only harm cities and villages, but have no reason to be included in the state budget (e.g., the expansion of prevailing wage, and the siting of small wireless facilities and renewable energy projects). Despite our desire, along with many others, to put the policy issues on hold, we understand there is a push to get some of these included in the State Budget, in the event the State Legislature does not return this year. The biggest threats right now appear to be the expansion of prevailing wage and siting of renewable energy projects. We encourage you to reach out to your legislators ASAP and let them know that now is not the time to address either of these issues -- especially the expansion of prevailing wage -- which could have a devastating impact on local budgets.

Statewide authorization for E-bikes and E-scooters is another policy issue that seems to be "in play." However, there have been discussions about giving certain downstate counties the authority to regulate such devices on behalf of the villages and towns within such counties. NYCOM staff has expressed its opposition to this idea since it is important that villages and towns have the ability to regulate these rideables in a way that best suits the needs of their communities.

Finally, with respect to funding for local governments, given the impact of COVID-19 on state and local finances, we remain hopeful that an increase in CHIPS and other infrastructure funding will make its way into the final agreement.