

Cozen Cities - September 11, 2024

Gig Economy & Technology

CHICAGO — CTA Launches AI Surveillance to Stop Gun Violence at Transit Stations

The Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) recently rolled out an artificial intelligence (AI) surveillance tool to detect guns at stations, a move that comes as the City's controversial contract with another firearm detection system, formerly known as ShotSpotter, is set to expire.

DETROIT — Detroit ID Card Program is Back

The Detroit Health Department is resuming its Detroit ID Card operation, which was paused in 2022 out of an abundance of caution over concerns about the potential for a breach of security of vendor software.

Labor & Employment

BOSTON — Teachers Work Without Contract as Students Head Back to School

Boston Public School teachers are beginning the year without a contract as negotiations with the City remain unresolved. The Boston Teachers Union is seeking changes to prevent teachers from fulfilling both general and special education roles simultaneously.

CHICAGO — Pace, Public School Paratransit Drivers Reach Tentative Contract Deal

Suburban bus service Pace and Chicago Public Schools drivers voted last week to ratify new contracts, which include higher wages comparable to others in the industry, paid sick and personal leave, and bonuses for full- and part-time employees.

MINNEAPOLIS/ST. PAUL — Twin Cities Small Businesses Growing Faster Than Peers, Harder Hit by Labor Shortage

Small businesses across Minneapolis and St. Paul grew more than in other cities, despite being significantly challenged by a dearth of skilled workers.

PHILADELPHIA — Parker Admin Settles Contract with Union Disputing Return-to-Office Policy

Philadelphia Mayor Cherelle Parker reached a contract extension with American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) District Council 47, which represents about 3,700 City employees like social workers and building inspectors.

SAN DIEGO — San Diego Hilton to Resume Talks with Striking Workers

Union members at the Hilton Bayfront remain the only hotel workers in the country still on strike after others returned to work following a short walkout.



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SEATTLE — Washington Hotel Workers Walk Off Job

UNITE HERE Local 8 members — including baristas, cooks, dishwashers, and front-desk agents — went on **strike** over Labor Day weekend at three Seattle-area hotels: Westin Seattle, Doubletree by Hilton Seattle Airport, and Seattle Airport Hilton and Conference Center.

Policy & Politics

BALTIMORE — Amendment to Strip Mayor of Spending Board Control Stalls

A proposed charter amendment to strip Baltimore's mayor of control over the City's spending board is **no longer moving forward**. City Council President Nick Mosby said the next Council should consider the measure, as it missed the deadline for inclusion on the November ballot.

DETROIT — Mayor Duggan Appoints City's First Director of Entrepreneurship & Economic Opportunity

Detroit Mayor Mike Duggan **announced** the appointment of Justin Onwenu as the City's first-ever Director of Entrepreneurship and Economic Opportunity. The newly created position will fall under the Jobs and Economy team and is designed to support and invest in local entrepreneurs and empower small businesses.

DETROIT — Former City Council President Exploring Mayoral Run

Former Detroit City Council President Saunteel Jenkins **launched** an exploratory committee for a potential mayoral run, tentatively planning to launch an official campaign next year after collecting necessary signatures to get on the ballot.

LOS ANGELES — New Report Addresses Reparations, Other Possible Solutions for L.A.'s Black Communities

Researchers at Cal State Northridge released a new **report** exploring historical experiences and policies that have negatively affected Black communities in the greater Los Angeles region from 1925 to today. Officials say this report will **provide** the basis for a future reparations proposal.

MINNEAPOLIS/ST. PAUL — Minneapolis City Council Considering Emergency Funding to Save Downtown Shelter, Food Shelf

Minneapolis City Council members are **proposing** a \$1.5 million grant to help save Agate Housing and Services, a century-old building providing shelter for 137 people experiencing homelessness, and its food shelf, both of which face closure without critical repairs.

NEW YORK — City Announces Plan for Universal Pre-K, 3-K

New York City Mayor Eric Adams and the City Council **announced** a plan to expand early childhood education by increasing the availability of pre-K and 3-K seats, developed by a working group from the FY25 budget to enhance outreach and better allocate open seats for families.

RICHMOND — City Council Approves Measure to Promote Citywide High-Speed Internet Access

This week, the Richmond City Council **passed** the "Digital Equity Implementation Plan," a resolution that aims to bridge the city's digital divide by assessing current internet quality, mapping infrastructure, and developing plans for equal access to high-speed connections.

RICHMOND — Mayoral Candidates Discuss Gun Violence, Affordable Housing at Forum

At a forum, Richmond mayoral candidates **discussed** their plans to address gun violence and affordable housing, emphasizing transparency and new leadership. All candidates pledged to implement a Group Violence Intervention program and address the city's affordable housing crisis through increased investment and policy reforms.

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Related Practice Areas

- Government Relations - Cozen O'Connor Public Strategies

SEATTLE — Residents Hit with Rising Utility, Electricity Bills

The Seattle City Council has [approved](#) plans for utility and electricity rate hikes, leading to average annual increases of 4% to 6% for residents through 2030.

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Council Member Indicted on Federal Bribery Charges

D.C. Councilmember Trayon White, Sr. (D-Ward 8) was [indicted](#) on federal bribery charges for allegedly accepting \$35,000 in cash bribes in exchange for influencing contract extensions. The D.C. Council is investigating the bribery allegations as well as his Ward 8 residency.

WASHINGTON, D.C. — 125 Local Orgs Awarded \$25M to Expand After-School Programs

D.C. Mayor Muriel Bowser [announced](#) that 125 organizations will receive \$25 million to expand after-school programs, benefiting 15,000 students this year. The grants, issued by the Deputy Mayor for Education's Office, will support various academic, arts, and career-focused activities.

Public Health & Safety

LOS ANGELES — Extreme Heat Poses Major Health Threat to Homeless Population in L.A.

Los Angeles City and County leaders are [working](#) hard to find shelter for the homeless as the extreme temperatures across Southern California pose a major health threat.

LOS ANGELES — Mayor Bass Secures DHS Support for L.A. Migrant Assistance

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) announced that Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass secured federal support for the Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights (CHIRLA), Clínica Romero, and the Central American Resource Center to [assist](#) immigrant families who recently arrived in Los Angeles in need of supportive services.

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Bill Proposes Increased Oversight of Troubled 911 Call Center

The D.C. Council is [considering](#) new legislation to increase transparency and oversight of the City's 911 call center, requiring the release of call records and performance reports and including provisions for monthly public hearings and unannounced visits.

Real Estate Development

BALTIMORE — Residents File Petition Challenging Harborplace Redevelopment Ballot Question

Several Baltimore residents filed a petition [challenging](#) the wording of a ballot question about the redevelopment of Harborplace, claiming it is misleading and confusing. They are seeking judicial review to clarify the ballot language before the November election.

NEW YORK — Mayor Adams Orders City Agencies to Review City-Controlled Land for Potential Housing Development

Mayor Adams signed an executive order [creating](#) the City Housing Activation Task Force, composed of representatives from mayoral agencies and public entities, which will review City-controlled land for potential development sites and establish guidelines to support housing production.

PHILADELPHIA — Mayor Parker to Center City Arena Town Hall

Mayor Parker will [host](#) a town hall at the Pennsylvania Convention Center on Wednesday to discuss the proposed Sixers arena, a project she has yet to take a firm stance on. A rival proposal from Comcast Spectacor [proposes](#) constructing a biomedical research hub on the site of the struggling Fashion District mall instead.

RICHMOND — City Council Approves Sale of School Property for Planned Parenthood Clinic to Mixed Reactions

The plan to build a Planned Parenthood clinic on a former school property in Richmond is facing both support from local healthcare advocates and opposition from anti-abortion groups challenging the city's decision.

RICHMOND — City to Release Proposed 2025 Real Estate Value Assessments

Beginning this week, the City of Richmond is releasing its proposed 2025 real estate value assessments, with notifications sent to homeowners about any changes. Those who disagree with their new assessments can appeal by mailing a form to the City by September 30.

SAN DIEGO — Convention Center Expansion Supporters Score Crucial Legal Victory on Hotel Tax Hike

In a crucial victory for backers of long-stalled plans to expand San Diego's convention center, a Superior Court judge issued a ruling that clears the way for financing the costly project with a hotel tax hike that was approved by voters four years ago.

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Mayor Bowser Announces 3 Downtown Commercial-to-Residential Conversion Projects

D.C. Mayor Muriel Bowser announced that the City will support three commercial-to-residential conversion projects with conditional tax abatements as part of its Housing in Downtown program. The projects will create more than 700 new residential units, including affordable housing, and aim to boost downtown vibrancy and attract new residents.

Taxes & Spending

BALTIMORE — Mayor Signs Executive Order to Manage \$242.5M from Opioid Lawsuit Settlements

Baltimore Mayor Brandon Scott has signed an executive order to manage \$242.5 million in opioid settlement funds, creating a dedicated restitution fund and advisory board to oversee its use. The plan includes immediate allocations for overdose prevention and a long-term trust to sustain community support for at least 15 years.

CHICAGO — City Facing Nearly \$1B Budget Deficit in 2025

A \$982.4 million budget shortfall is attributed to an increase in labor costs, a decrease in revenue from state corporate taxes, higher costs for city employee pensions and personnel expenses, \$150 million allocation for ongoing migrant support, and uncertainty surrounding the \$175 million payment for Chicago Public Schools pensions.

SEATTLE — City Council Considers Funding for Youth, Urban Farming Projects

The Seattle City Council is considering a \$27.25 million investment in six participatory budgeting projects, including \$7 million to create up to five public greenspaces for urban farming, supporting community gardens, rooftop gardening, and small-scale farming initiatives for local families.

WASHINGTON, D.C. — City to Cancel \$42M in Medical Debt for Low-Income Residents

D.C. is working with nonprofit Undue Medical Debt to cancel nearly \$42 million in medical debt for low-income residents by purchasing and forgiving it at a fraction of its value. Affected residents will receive letters notifying them that their debt has been erased and credit restored.

Transportation & Mobility

BOSTON — MBTA Launches New Reduced Fare Program

The Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) [launched](#) a new reduced fare program last week, expanding eligibility to all adults with incomes below a certain level, potentially halving transit costs for an additional 60,000 riders.

DETROIT — City Awarded \$23.4M for EV Charging Infrastructure Program

The City of Detroit [received](#) \$23.4 million in federal funding to expand electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure as part of a broader \$521 million investment under the Charging and Fueling Infrastructure (CFI) Program, designed to reduce transportation emissions and increase access to EV charging stations nationwide.

LOS ANGELES — Officials Announce New Funding Program for Zero-Emission School Buses

Late last month, officials from the California Environmental Protection Agency, the California Air Resources Board, the California Energy Commission, and the Los Angeles Unified School District [announced](#) funding for a new program designed to promote green vehicles.

LOS ANGELES — Port of L.A. to Move Forward with \$52M On-Dock Rail Improvement

The Port of Los Angeles is [poised](#) to move forward with a \$52 million infrastructure dock improvement that will improve on-dock rail capacity, after the harbor commission approved the latest lease amendment last week.

NEW YORK — MTA Ends Free Bus Routes

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) [ended](#) its free bus ride pilot program in New York City after a report revealed that nearly half of bus riders were evading fares, costing the agency around \$315 million.

PHILADELPHIA — City Considers Banning Stopping in Bike Lanes

Following several high-profile cyclist and pedestrian deaths, the Philadelphia City Council is [considering](#) a ban on stopping in bike lanes and increasing fines for violations, with cycling advocates voicing strong support for legislation introduced last week.

RICHMOND — Greyhound Station to Close in October; What's Next for Bus Service?

Richmond's Greyhound station will [close](#) in October, with plans to convert the building into apartments. FlixBus is negotiating a new bus stop location across from Main Street Station to maintain service, while City officials work to ensure alternative transit options are available.
