

Broad Street Brief: Gun Violence Debate Continues in City Hall As Victim Numbers Grow

CITY HALL

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Philadelphia's elected officials continue to spar over the city's gun violence epidemic, resulting in dueling press conferences and high tensions. Much of the contention comes after Mayor Kenney [declined](#) to declare a city-wide state of emergency over gun violence, a move [quickly and strongly](#) criticized by West Philadelphia Councilmember Jamie Gauthier. Council's leadership team [released a statement](#) late last week in response, highlighting new anti-violence spending in the budget and the creation of a "Violence Prevention & Opportunity Monitoring Group." Yesterday morning, City Council and Mayor Kenney [provided](#) more details about the role of the group and the process for community groups to access new violence-prevention funding.

PICA Approves City's Five-Year Plan, But Raises Concerns About Long-Term Viability

On Tuesday, the Pennsylvania Intergovernmental Cooperation Authority (PICA) unanimously [approved](#) the five-year financial plan constructed by the Kenney administration and City Council. However, members of the state board expressed concerns about Philadelphia's depleted rainy-day fund, seemingly low allocations to fulfill its four major municipal union contracts, and uncertainty surrounding the city's current tax structure and revenue sources. PICA has overseen the city's finances since the 1990s and is currently scheduled to dissolve in 2023.

MLK Drive Reopening in August, I-95 Park and Washington Ave. Construction Delayed

Philadelphia's post-pandemic infrastructure plans are now clearer, with updates on several major projects. The city [announced](#) that MLK Drive, which had been closed to vehicles since the start of the pandemic, will reopen on August 4 at 5 p.m. MLK Drive will still be closed to traffic on weekends until October. Additionally, the [I-95 cap project](#) on Penn's Landing has been delayed until at least 2023, and a major renovation of Washington Avenue has been [postponed](#) until 2022.

From Cozen Currents: COVID Resurgence Challenges Biden's Approval and Influence

With a growth in cases due to the COVID-19 Delta variant, President Biden's high approval rating on his handling of the pandemic is threatened, especially as new infections are concentrated among the unvaccinated. Concentrated in Trump-supporting areas, unvaccinated people and their elected officials are generally out of President Biden's sphere of influence, limiting the federal government's ability to reign in new cases. In addition, the CDC also released [new mask guidance](#), urging fully vaccinated individuals to mask in areas of "substantial or high transmission." Additionally, the pandemic may prove to have a long-term influence on federal aid programs, both for individuals and businesses. For more, please see Cozen Current's [latest edition](#).

Federal Update: \$1 Trillion Infrastructure Deal Passes Key Senate Vote with Bipartisan Support

Yesterday afternoon, a bipartisan group of senators that have been negotiating an infrastructure package for months announced that they reached a compromise on key legislative concepts. Last night, the Senate [voted](#) to take up a \$1 trillion infrastructure bill that would significantly invest in roads, bridges, public transit, water, and other physical infrastructure. Seventeen Republicans voted with all 50 Democrats — including Senate Minority Leader McConnell, which signals that his



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party is open to working with Democrats to get this bill across the finish line. Although this infrastructure package must still be written into formal legislative text and pass both the House and Senate, the procedural vote yesterday was a key breakthrough. As final passage approaches, industries and interest groups will begin to jockey for targeted spending and investment; please reach out to a member of the Public Strategies' team for more information.
