

Cozen Cities: February 22, 2023

Gig Economy & Technology

CHICAGO — Chicago Rideshare Workers Demand Living Wage, Accountable Politicians

On the evening of February 2, Chicago rideshare drivers gathered outside the Copernicus Center on the city's Northwest Side, braving extremely cold and windy weather, to demand better working conditions, wages and benefits.

LOS ANGELES — Waymo's Autonomous Rideshare Service Enters Testing Phase In Los Angeles Ahead of Planned Rollout

In Los Angeles, Waymo's vehicles are in the testing phase as they await the proper permits. Until the process is complete, people are still sitting in the driver's seat.

Labor & Employment

CHICAGO — Struggling Nonprofits Feel Blindsided by Pending City Labor Law

As a three-year-old proposed city ordinance gains momentum ahead of Chicago's municipal elections, its sudden emergence has left nonprofit leaders feeling blindsided. The Human Services Workforce Advancement Ordinance would mandate that human service nonprofits receiving city funding establish a "labor peace" agreement with unions representing or seeking to represent its employees. The move effectively would require nonprofits contracted with the city to pay workers union-negotiated wages.

CHICAGO — Half of Chicago Workers Now Back in the Office for First Time Since Pandemic Began

Office staff in Chicago and other major cities are returning to their physical job sites, even if the trend is so sporadic that it frustrates building managers and businesses eager for more downtown action. One widely followed data source on post-pandemic office usage has crossed a threshold. Kastle, a provider of building security systems, said that in late January, office occupancy levels in Chicago exceeded 50% for the first time since the coronavirus shutdowns hit businesses in March 2020.

DETROIT — Detroit Area Black, Latino Workers Lag in Access to Quality Jobs, Report Says

Black and Latino workers in southeast Michigan, particularly those living in Detroit, have less access to the region's fastest-growing, well-paying jobs, according to a report released February 13 by Detroit Future City. The nonprofit's report says the reasons for this gap include the need for skills training as well as systemic racism and discrimination in hiring. According to the report, 16% of Black workers in the region are in a growth occupation compared to 26% of White workers. These jobs include 107 roles in three major fields: management, business and finance; healthcare and computers, engineering and science.

LOS ANGELES — Los Angeles Adopts Fair Workweek Measures

Los Angeles recently joined nine cities that have enacted fair workweek legislation. The Los Angeles Fair Work Week Ordinance will apply to retail businesses that have at least 300 employees worldwide, including franchises. Employees who qualify for minimum wage and perform at least



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two hours of work in a workweek in Los Angeles will be covered by the ordinance, which contains a host of scheduling and recordkeeping requirements. It is scheduled to go into effect on April 1.

NEW YORK CITY – Largest Municipal Union Reaches Agreement For 16.21% Raises Through 2026

Mayor Adams and District Council 37, New York City's largest municipal workers' union, have reached a tentative five-year contract agreement. The deal guarantees 16.21% in wage increases by 2026. As the city's largest public workers' union, this contract is expected to set a precedent for the Adams Administration's renewal of other expired contracts.

PHILADELPHIA – Philly Shipyard to Recruit From Participants in WPSI, NYSI Professional Development Program

Philly Shipyard Inc. has announced that it will be offering unionized apprenticeship positions for graduates of a new, three-week professional development program created by the University City District's West Philadelphia Skills Initiative (WPSI) and PIDC's Navy Yard Skills Initiative (NYSI). Positions will start at \$22 an hour, an increase from \$17.13 an hour.

RICHMOND – Richmond City Employees Take Steps Toward Unionization

In July 2022, Richmond City Council approved a collective bargaining ordinance that formally recognized five categories of workers who were eligible to request unions. As of last Thursday, workers from all five units — including police, fire and emergency services, labor and trades, professional, and administrative and technical workers — have filed for union elections.

Policy & Politics

BALTIMORE – Baltimore City Council President, Comptroller Continue to Butt Heads With Mayor Scott Over Conduit Deal With BGE

Last Friday, Baltimore City Council President Nick Mosby and City Comptroller Bill Henry voiced their opposition to a controversial city contract with Baltimore Gas and Electric (BGE) that was negotiated by Mayor Brandon Scott during a Zoom meeting with the city's Senate delegation in Annapolis. Council President Mosby and Comptroller Henry allege that Mayor Scott "broke the rules" by making the deal in private and pushing the deal through the Board of Estimates without a quorum, which had not been reached due to Mosby's and Henry's absence out of protest of the deal.

CHICAGO – Chicago's Population Shift Puts Latinos at Heart of Mayoral Race

U.S. Rep. Chuy Garcia, 66, is looking to become Chicago's first Latino mayor. He's hoping to tap one of the fastest-growing populations in the Windy City ahead of the February 28 election, where rising crime rates and taxes are top issues for voters. The strategy may prove beneficial in a crowded race that counts nine candidates. A recent poll shows Garcia among the three top contenders along with Paul Vallas, a former head of Chicago Public Schools, and Mayor Lori Lightfoot.

DETROIT – Detroit Panel Rejects Pay Raises Elected Officials Sought, Okays 3.5% Hike Instead

Commissioners in charge of setting salaries for the Detroit mayor, City Council members and city clerk will not be giving the elected officials the raises they asked for earlier this month. Instead, the Elected Officials Compensation Commission, meeting Wednesday at city hall, unanimously voted to hike the elected officials' salaries by 3.5% through fiscal year 2025 after those officials went a couple years without raises. Commissioners voted to raise the elected officials' current salaries by 7% through the end of fiscal year 2023, which ends June 30 this year.

LOS ANGELES – LA City Council Wants To Determine Its Own Redistricting Reforms

The Los Angeles City Council on Wednesday, February 15, took a stand against proposed state legislation that would let state lawmakers, not local officials, determine an independent redistricting commission for the city. The council voted 11-2 to support a resolution put forward by Council

President Paul Krekorian, and seconded by Councilmember Nithya Raman, to oppose Senate Bill 52. SB 52 would allow the state Legislature to establish an independent redistricting commission for the city.

NEW YORK CITY — Chief Judge Nominee Rejected by State Senate

The full New York State Senate rejected Governor Kathy Hochul's nominee for chief judge, Hector LaSalle, in a 39-20 vote primarily along party lines. This followed a rejection by the Senate Judiciary Committee last month and ends a stalemate between the Governor and the Senate.

PHILADELPHIA — Mayoral Candidates Considering Methods to Bypass Authority of District Attorney Krasner

Three candidates in the race to become the 100th mayor of Philadelphia — former Councilmembers At-Large Derek Green and Allan Domb and local grocery store owner Jeff Brown — are considering ways to circumvent the authority of District Attorney Larry Krasner in order to mitigate the city's ongoing gun violence crisis. One method being proposed is referring gun-related criminal cases directly to state or federal prosecutors instead of the DA's Office.

PHILADELPHIA — City Council President Clarke Considering Retirement After 11 Years in the Position

Philadelphia City Council President Darrell L. Clarke has stated that he is considering retiring at the end of this year as his current term comes to an end — though outside influences are reportedly trying to convince him not to. Last week, Curtis Wilkerson, the Council President's Chief of Staff, acquired nominating petitions to run to represent the 5th Councilmanic District — the district currently represented by his boss.

SAN DIEGO — San Diego City Council Passes Plan for Sustainable Development Areas

Wide-ranging updates to the city's development regulations were approved by a 5-4 vote by the San Diego City Council Tuesday, including changing the boundaries for certain home construction incentive programs. This move is intended to increase the amount of developable land near major public transit stops.

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Mayor Bowser Under Fire for New School Budget Proposal

Last week, Mayor Muriel E. Bowser unveiled a proposed school budget that would increase the per-student funding formula and includes \$19.8 million in local recovery dollars. However, the proposal has drawn ire of city officials, as about 20 campuses would lose funding, potentially violating a council law passed in 2022 that intended to stabilize school funding.

Public Health & Safety

BALTIMORE — Student Group Opposes Baltimore City Public Schools' Weapons Detection System Pilot

A group called the Baltimore Student Union launched a social media campaign last week in opposition to a new wireless weapons detection system called Evolv that Baltimore City Public Schools will be piloting this spring. School officials have responded that input on the pilot program is welcome, and will be moving forward with plans to install the system at four Baltimore schools for testing.

CHICAGO — Chicago Expands Mental Health Network to All Neighborhoods

Chicago's mental health network is expanding citywide. Chicago's Trauma-Informed Centers of Care, or TICC for short, will provide community-based mental health services — regardless of health insurance, immigration status or ability to pay. As part of the expansion, the Chicago Department of Public Health will partner with libraries to also offer counseling services.

DETROIT — New Center in Detroit Aims to Provide Homeless With Healthcare, Place to Recover

"The Detroit Healthy Housing Center will provide critical services to unhoused Detroit residents -

medical care, wraparound supports, temporary housing, medical rescue, food support, and workforce development. This holistic approach reminds us the fight against homelessness is a marathon, not a sprint," said Lt. Gov. Garlin Gilchrist. This is the second phase of the Detroit Healthy Housing Campus. The first phase, the Clay Apartments, has been housing for the formerly homeless since 2020.

LOS ANGELES — Officials Celebrate Opening of New Housing for Homeless in Skid Row

On the same day that city, county and state officials gathered to celebrate a \$41.8 million permanent supportive housing project in Skid Row, Gov. Gavin Newsom's administration announced that nearly \$200 million is coming to Los Angeles County communities to support traditional affordable housing — a need policymakers say must be addressed to prevent people from slipping into homelessness in the first place.

SAN DIEGO — San Diego Will End COVID-19 Emergency Despite Outbreaks

Even though San Diego officials have voted to end the state of emergency surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, health experts say the pandemic is far from over. As of February 2, San Diego County public health officials counted more than 1,800 confirmed cases of COVID-19, nearly 300 hospitalizations related to the disease and 12 deaths from the last week. The case number is much lower than what it was at the height of the winter outbreak, but public officials continue to urge caution.

SEATTLE — Sea-Tac Uncovers PFAS Legacy

Currently at Sea-Tac, five tanker trucks hold over 2,000 gallons of PFAS foam. Regulators are working on how to dispose of this foam, as the Defense Department just published the first-ever specifications for PFAS-free foams.

Real Estate Development

BOSTON — Real Estate Community Hopes Healey Will Check Wu's Progressive Policies

The development community in Boston appears to be hoping that Governor Healey will put a check on Mayor Wu's progressive policies. While Healey is a Democrat, unlike Massachusetts' last Governor, she appears to be more business-friendly than Wu.

CHICAGO — City House Prices Dropped 10% in January

The price of a house in Chicago took a big step down in January, a time when it's usually rising. The median price of houses sold in the city was \$261,000 in January, down 10% from the same time a year earlier. That's according to data posted February 14 by the Chicago Association of Realtors. The drop is considerably larger than price declines in the condo market and in surrounding counties.

DETROIT — Detroit Leads Nation in Number of Homes Priced \$200,000 or Lower

Where are all the affordable homes? Well, Detroit leads the nation in the number of homes priced under \$200,000 and ranks among other cities in the United States, most of which are located towards the middle of the country. The data shows Detroit has the most homes for sale below \$200,000. Of these almost 4,000 homes, nearly half are priced below \$100,000.

Taxes & Spending

CHICAGO — Each Chicago Taxpayer on Hook for Nearly \$42,000 of City Debt

Chicago's debt per taxpayer remains the nation's second highest at \$41,900, the latest Financial State of the Cities report from fiscal watchdog Truth in Accounting shows. That means each of the city's taxpayers would have to send a check for that amount to City Hall just to pay the bills Chicago has accumulated over the years. The Windy City was surpassed only by New York City, which had a per taxpayer debt burden of \$56,900.

DETROIT — Detroit Mayor Proposes \$156 Million in Surplus Spending for Neighborhoods, Retirees

Mayor Mike Duggan has proposed spending more than \$150 million of Detroit's budget surplus in part to fix broken sidewalks, demolish dangerous buildings, renovate parks and add money to the city's pension program. The \$156 million proposal, submitted to City Council for vote, comes after 2021-22 revenues were "much higher" than expected, according to a statement from the city. The increases are primarily due to increased income tax revenues from new jobs in Detroit.

LOS ANGELES — LA City Council Votes to Close Hotel Tax Loophole

The City Council voted for an ordinance Tuesday that aims to close a loophole allowing hotels in Los Angeles to avoid collecting transient occupancy taxes. Currently, hotels could bypass collecting and remitting the city's transient occupancy tax via a "secondary operator" that would collect the tax on the hotel's behalf, but the city would have no method of collecting the tax if the secondary operator does not "have any assets and fails to collect the tax," according to a September motion. The ordinance, which will come before the council next week for a second reading, would amend language in the city code to address the loophole.

SAN DIEGO — As San Diego's Cannabis Tax Revenue Plummets, Officials Blame Illegal Market, New Competition

Revenue from San Diego's cannabis tax has been dropping sharply in recent months as the city's two dozen dispensaries face growing competition from delivery services and new dispensaries in other nearby cities. San Diego officials say they now expect cannabis tax revenue to be 23 percent lower than they had previously expected during the ongoing fiscal year that ends June 30 — \$19.8 million versus \$25.7 million.

Transportation & Mobility

BOSTON — Boston School District Launches City's First Electric School Buses

Boston's first two electric school buses have begun service. Mayor Wu has pledged to electrify the entire fleet by 2030, and a batch of 20 buses is expected to begin service after February vacation. At the moment, Boston has over 700 gas-powered school buses.

DETROIT — Express Shuttle Between Downtown Detroit, Metro Airport Could Launch By End Of 2023

Metro Detroiters could have another option for getting to and from Detroit Metro Airport without a car as soon as later this year. Planning for an express shuttle connecting downtown to Metro is in the works, meaning good news for Detroit's air travelers who don't drive or are tired of shelling out for airport parking. The Regional Transit Authority of Southeast Michigan could launch the shuttle by late 2023 or early 2024, thanks to a \$2 million grant that the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments received from the federal infrastructure bill and about \$500,000 in funding from the state.

SAN DIEGO — San Diego Will Subsidize Downtown's Fred Shuttle Service for Another Year

The now-familiar FRED shuttles that cart people around downtown San Diego free of charge will continue to do so for the time being. Tuesday, San Diego City Council members voted unanimously to spend \$1.2 million in downtown parking revenue to extend its contract with operator Circuit Transit through April 20, 2024. However, the contract now includes a 30-day termination clause as the city anticipates shifting gears slightly before the end of the term.

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Metro Increases Red Line Train Frequency to Accommodate Ridership

The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) will be increasing the frequency of Red Line trains beginning this week. The move follows the increased frequency of Blue, Orange, and Blue Plus line service, which began earlier this month, and reflects increased ridership as the

COVID-19 pandemic continues to subside.
