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2012 Legislative Priorities

Issues of importance to
Washington County



2012 Legislative Priorities

Counties remain highly dependent on property taxes to finance state mandated programs. This reliance is especially significant in the health and human services and public safety/criminal justice areas. The Washington County Board of Commissioners urges the state to examine how local government services should be funded, including diversifying the funding sources available to local government. Growth in state aid to local governments should be linked to growth in state mandates.

The following are Washington County's top legislative priorities for the 2012 legislative session.

Local Taxpayer Protection

Washington County seeks to protect its local taxpayers from any further shifts of state costs to the county property tax and the subsequent erosion to its ability to deliver high-quality essential services in an efficient manner. The county encourages the Legislature and the Governor to develop a state budget that provides flexibility and full funding for any mandates imposed on local government.

Sale of Tax Forfeited Land

Washington County supports special legislation that will allow the county to convey or sell a parcel located in the City of St. Paul Park that borders water.

Support for Construction of a New St. Croix River Crossing

Washington County supports the efforts of the Minnesota Department of Transportation to deliver the new St. Croix River Crossing project in 2013. It requests that the Legislature continue to allocate needed funding for completion of this critical project in Washington County.

Gateway Corridor

Washington County and the Washington County Regional Rail Authority requests \$1,000,000 in state bonds for the preliminary engineering work for the Gateway Corridor, based on the recommendations of the Alternative Analysis study and the draft Environmental Impact Statement.

Trail Link Between the Hastings Bridge and Point Douglas Trail

Washington County requests \$5 million to design and construct two trail bridges and related trails that would connect the Washington County and Dakota County regional trail systems.

Brown's Creek State Trail Grade Separation at Manning Avenue

Washington County encourages the state to fund a grade separation project at the crossing of Manning Avenue and the Brown's Creek State Trail to increase safety.

Suggested Mandates for Consideration of Repeal or Reform as the County has no or Limited Ability to Manage Costs

- Eliminate shift of public defender costs to the county for representing parents in Children in Need of Protection or Termination of Parental Rights cases (approximately \$152,000 annually).
- Eliminate remaining state court costs paid by the counties (approximately \$406,000 annually).
- Eliminate county share for medical assistance costs for those under 65 years of age who are disabled and placed in nursing homes for more than 90 days; for certain intermediate care facilities for the mentally retarded; for individuals placed in institutions for mental disease; and for holding sex offenders (approximately \$450,000 annually).
- Eliminate the requirement that counties be responsible for detoxification costs (approximately \$230,000 annually).
- Allow web publication in lieu of newspaper publication of County Board minutes, financial statements, summary budgets and delinquent property tax notices (approximately \$17,000 annually).