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Date: Aug. 13, 2019
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The following actions were taken at the Aug. 13, 2019, Washington County Board of Commissioners meeting at the Government Center in Stillwater, Minnesota

County Board agrees to join Great River Rail Commission

The Washington County Board of Commissioners, sitting as the Regional Railroad Authority Aug. 13, agreed to be part of the Great River Rail Commission.

The Great River Rail Commission, formerly known as High Speed Rail Commission, has updated its Joint Powers Agreement. The commission advocates for the development of the Twin Cities-Milwaukee-Chicago Second Train Project, a daily round-trip passenger train between the Twin Cities and Chicago.

Washington County will become a member of the re-formed Great River Rail Commission beginning in September. Dues for the commission are budgeted in the 2020 Regional Rail budget, which will be \$4,251, and prorated dues for 2019 of \$1,417 will also come from Regional Rail.

Other members of the commission are Dakota County Regional Railroad Authority, Goodhue County Regional Railroad Authority, Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority, Wabasha County Regional Railroad Authority, Winona County Regional Railroad Authority, La Crosse Area Planning Committee, City of Cottage Grove, City of Goodview, City of Hastings, City of Lake City, City of Red Wing, City of St. Charles, City of St. Paul, City of St. Paul Park, City of Utica, City of Wabasha, and City of Winona.

Contact: Jan Lucke, Public Works Planning Director, 651-430-4316

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County will receive operational grant from Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs

Washington County will receive a \$17,500 grant from the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs. The County Board accepted the grant Aug. 13. The money is used to assist with annual mandatory training, purchase office equipment, enhance services offered to veterans, and improve the overall operations of the office.

Contact: Ryan Carufel, Veterans Service Officer, 615-430-6857

County Board approves application for liquor license for Disabled Veterans Rest Camp

The Washington County Board of Commissioners approved an application Aug. 13 for an on-sale and Sunday liquor license for the Disabled Veterans Rest Camp in May Township.

Washington County processes all liquor licenses for the townships in the county. The county reviews the liquor liability insurance, and the Sheriff's Office, County Attorney's Office, and the Department of Public Health and Environment perform compliance and verification checks.

The license fees pay the cost of the county for administration, compliance, and verification checks.

Contact: Steve Gransee, Property Records and Taxpayer Services Division Manager, 651-430-8272.

County will receive \$1 million for road improvements in Mahtomedi, Willernie

The Minnesota Department of Transportation will provide \$1 million in a local roadway improvement program to help pay for major roadway projects through Mahtomedi and Willernie.

The Washington County Board of Commissioners accepted the grant Aug. 13.

In October 2017, Washington County applied for grant funds through the state program, which provides funding for construction projects that are developed and administered by local agencies and provide a benefit to both the local community and the trunk highway system. This funding assists cities, counties, and townships in paying costs associated with eliminating a transportation system deficiency. In turn, the program promotes local, regional, and state economic development efforts and improves safety.

The County State Aid Highway (CSAH) 12 project was selected for the grant, which will be allocated as \$600,000 to the City of Mahtomedi and \$400,000 to the City of Willernie.

Contact: Wayne Sandberg, Deputy Public Works Director, County Engineer, 651-430-4339

Kraus-Anderson will make safety improvements to County Jail

Kraus-Anderson will make safety improvements to the Washington County Jail, after the County Board approved a \$581,954 contract with the company Aug. 13.

The Jail Safety Improvement project will address safety improvements in four separation units, which are areas of higher risk of incidents. The scope of the project will include installation of floor-to-ceiling railing systems with polycarbonate glass for the mezzanines and stairs.

The project will be funded by a combination of county contingency funds and the capital repair fund.

Contact: Erik Jalowitz, Building Services Capital Projects Manager, 651-430-6227

Washington County makes financial commitment to Gold Line

The Washington County Board of Commissioners made a funding commitment to the Gold Line bus rapid transit project Aug. 13, which is required to receive a Federal Transit Administration project rating and before the project may enter the engineering phase of work.

Gold Line bus rapid transit will provide a package of transit enhancements that deliver fast, comfortable, and cost-effective services using special roadways or lanes dedicated to the exclusive use of buses between downtown St. Paul and Woodbury, along Hudson Road, parallel to Interstate 94. The transit corridor has been planned for several years, and is now in the design and engineering stage, in preparation for construction and operation in 2024. Washington County's commitment is:

- 34 percent of the cost of the project development phase of work, in an amount not to exceed \$8.5 million;
- 50 percent of the cost of the engineering, in an amount not-to-exceed \$37.5 million;
- 20.6 percent of the cost of construction, in an amount not-to-exceed \$74.5 million;
- 26.1 percent of the total project cost of \$461 million, in an amount not-to-exceed \$120.5 million, which includes the county's contributions to all phases of work; and
- 25 percent of the net operating subsidy upon commencement of operations.

Ramsey County is making the same funding commitment as is Washington County. It is expected that the Federal Transit Administration will pay for 45 percent of the capital costs of the project. Money for the project development and engineering costs will come from revenue collected through the Counties Transit Improvement Board and Washington County's transportation sales tax; money for construction will also come from the county's transportation sales tax.

Contact: Jan Lucke, Public Works Planning Director, 651-430-4316

Washington County Board has first review of 2020 budget

The Washington County Board of Commissioners received an overview of the county's 2020 budget at a workshop Aug. 13.

The board will review the budget through September, with individual departments presenting more detailed proposed budgets at workshops. Departments that provide internal services in the county, as well as the Community Development Agency, provided detailed budget proposals at the Aug. 13 workshop. A public hearing on the budget will be the evening of Dec. 3, before the final budget is adopted Dec. 10.

The recommended budget reflects the continued population growth in the county, which is now the third fastest growing county in the state at an annual rate of 1.8 percent. Increased population requires additional road improvements, increased county services, and the buildings in which to house those services. More people place demands on recreational opportunities in county parks, and services at county libraries.

The property tax levy, which will be set Sept. 24, is recommended to increase by 5.94 percent, which will translate into a 2.3 percent decrease in the county's tax rate. This would be the sixth time in the last seven years that the county tax rate would fall. Once the County Board sets the levy, it may lower it but it cannot raise it in the final budget.

Should the recommended levy be approved, the impact on the owner of the median valued home in the county, which is \$295,200, would be an increase of \$37 a year in county taxes.

Recommended budget increases include investments in public safety, with the addition of two correctional officers to work in the county's jail, a half-time Sheriff's Office deputy, and three additional positions in the County Attorney's Office. The budget reflects increases in the costs of the

Sheriff's Office patrol vehicles, and the replacement of portions of the public safety radio systems. Other positions recommended would be for maintenance workers for the county's parks and highways.

The county will also add positions in its license centers to reduce wait times for customers in the centers, and staff to conduct the 2020 elections, which, in addition to the general election and the state primary, will include the first presidential nominating primary conducted in the state in 30 years in March. Additional staff will be added to Community Services to deliver human services programs and reduce caseloads.

Spending on county infrastructure is included in the recommended 2020 budget. Improvements would be made in the county's Information Technology equipment to secure and protect county data, and provide backup systems for the data. The budget will also include the cost of addressing deferred maintenance in the county's parks, needed to maximize the life of the buildings.

The budget includes \$26.9 million for the Gold Line, the county's share of the cost of the bus rapid transit project that will provide regular transit service between downtown St. Paul, and Woodbury, along Hudson Road, parallel to Interstate 94. The transit corridor has been planned for several years, and is now in the design and engineering stage, in preparation for construction and operation in 2024. Other major capital projects scheduled for 2020 include more than \$4 million to improve road pavement, and more than \$20 million for construction of County State Aid Highway (CSAH) 19 from Dale Road to CSAH 18; CSAH 5 from County Road 64 to Sycamore Street West; the CSAH 18 and CSAH 20 intersection in Woodbury; and CSAH 18 from Woodlane Drive to CSAH 13 in Woodbury. The recommended net levy for 2020 would be \$114.5 million, with recommended non-levy revenue of \$134.2 million; operating expenditures are recommended to be \$194.6 million; and capital expenditures are recommended to be \$39.5 million.

The Community Development Agency also presented its recommended budget for 2020 Aug. 13. The agency oversees housing in the county, including senior housing, with a plan to build 300-plus units of workforce housing in the next two or three years, with 10 new supportive housing units. The agency also works with landlords to expand housing choices in the county, and preserve existing affordable housing, and to provide rental assistance for families, veterans, seniors, and people with disabilities.

The agency promotes economic development opportunities in the county by furthering development opportunities, creating shovel-ready sites, and leveraging private investment through the Open to Business program and the predevelopment finance fund.

The agency's income comes from rental revenue from its properties, grants, investment income, and the property tax levy. Next year's proposed property levy of \$5.4 million would reflect a 3.6 percent increase.

Additional information on the proposed 2020 budget may be found on the county's website www.co.washington.mn.us by searching "budget."

Contact: Kevin Corbid, Deputy Administrator, 651-430-6003