

Dakota County 2023 Policy Priorities



VI-2023

ENERGY EFFICIENCY IMPROVEMENTS

The issue: Dakota County owns and operates approximately 1.5 million square feet of facilities, including nine libraries, three service centers, detention facilities, a 911 center, maintenance facilities, and dozens of park buildings and structures. These facilities all consume electricity and natural gas totaling approximately \$2 million in annual expense to county taxpayers. As energy prices continue to escalate, conservation and on-site generation measures are critical to reduce the long-term annual utility expenses.

Dakota County has converted about 50 percent of its spaces to LED lighting, primarily during renovation or construction projects. The other 50 percent of space remains to be converted to LED fixtures. Boilers and chillers in some facilities are at or beyond their useful life expectancy and need to be replaced with new technology and more efficient units. Dakota County has identified a package of energy efficiency improvement projects that primarily addresses equipment to be replaced within five years.

The solution: \$20 million in state funding to complete Dakota County energy efficiency improvements with a high return on investment. These improvements will remove 4,300 metric tons of carbon dioxide emissions annually and cut county utility bills by 25 percent.

BUS RAPID TRANSIT FUNDING EQUITY

The issue: The Metropolitan Council operates bus rapid transit (BRT) lines throughout the metropolitan region. The council controls operational budgets and allocates funding accordingly. The council receives 50 percent of the funding subsidies for highway-based BRT lines from county resources while BRT lines that are not highway-based are funded solely by the council with state subsidies. This arrangement is unfair to the counties responsible for subsidies.

The solution: Treat all BRT services consistently and fairly through fares and state subsidies as determined by the Legislature and Governor without relying on county taxpayer support for the services.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICE SUPPORT

The issue: Communities across Minnesota are facing urgent and unprecedented mental health challenges. Dakota County has responded by developing a continuum of services based on national best practices, but these cannot be sustained without state support.

The solution: Dakota County supports the state fully funding these model mental health services:

- 24/7 phone and mobile crisis response, so people have someone to talk to in a crisis.
 - **Request:** \$2.7 million annually
- Crisis residential and intensive residential treatment services, including funding for capital costs, so people have a place to go when needed.
 - **Request:** \$6.4 million
- Crisis follow-up and stabilization services, including embedded social workers with local law enforcement, to address underlying needs following a crisis.
 - **Request:** \$800,000 annually

Dakota County also recognizes the need to invest in “upstream” solutions that promote health and wellbeing, reducing future crises. Dakota County supports investments that modernize and transform human services for the future:

- Funding for family resource centers and other community-based alternatives to formal human services programs.
- Streamlined Department of Human Services program rules and reporting requirements.

APPROPRIATE HANDLING OF FREEWAY LANDFILL

The issue: The Freeway Landfill in Burnsville is listed as a federal Superfund site and threatens surrounding surface and groundwater supplies with pollution. Dakota County supports state efforts to remediate the environmental effects of this landfill.

The solution: Support legislation or actions that provide funding to properly close the Freeway Landfill in a manner acceptable to Dakota County, to protect health and the environment and benefit the local community.