

Dakota County 2023 Legislative Priorities



FULLY FUND LOCAL COSTS FOR STATE MANDATES — OR RELAX THEM

The issue: State-imposed mandates across a variety of county services require funding beyond the state's financial support. This imposes higher costs on local governments and property taxpayers. Examples in Dakota County and elsewhere include:

- The state's Sustainable Buildings 2030 (B3) energy conservation requirements for new buildings and renovations that use state funding can add construction costs that exceed future utility savings. This adds to the local cost of the project and diminishes the net benefit of state funding. In two current Dakota County examples, the additional costs to comply with the B3 requirements add 15-20% to the construction cost and have a simple payback three times longer than the life of the additional equipment investment. The state should fully fund the added costs of B3 or eliminate the requirement where not economically feasible.
- The state saves millions by having a low incarceration rate in the state prison system and instead places offenders in the county probation system. State funding for county probation has not kept up with actual cost and caseload growth, burdening local taxpayers and straining local public safety resources. The state should adopt a modernized formula for county probation services and fully fund it.
- New Department of Human Services requirements for case plans and residential treatment program eligibility can take three times longer to complete. The state should fully fund staffing to meet these requirements or streamline the process.
- When an individual is awaiting a transfer from one state-operated facility, such as a residential treatment center, to another state-operated facility, the state bills the county, even when counties cannot influence the timing of the transfer. The state should not charge a county for days an individual is awaiting transfer.

- Local governments in Minnesota administer statewide elections, including the presidential nominating primary. The state provided funding to support the presidential nominating primary, but it did not cover all of local governments' costs. The state should fully reimburse local governments for the actual cost of administering presidential nominating primary elections.

SUPPORT MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

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: Provide \$6.4 million in one-time state investment and \$3.5 million in ongoing funding to support these model mental health services:

- 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**
- 24/7 phone and mobile crisis response, so people have someone to talk to in a crisis. **Request: \$2.7 million annually**
- Crisis follow-up and stabilization services, including embedded social workers with local law enforcement, to address underlying needs. **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.

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PROTECT CURRENT MOTOR VEHICLE LEASE SALES TAX DISTRIBUTION

The issue: The Motor Vehicle Lease Sales Tax (MVLST) is a critical funding source to address highway needs in growing suburban areas, including Dakota County. Transit in Dakota County depends on local roads as well as county and state highways, furthering the need to invest in highway infrastructure.

Even with the current MVLST distribution, Dakota County highway needs are so significant that the county — and other suburban counties — use a portion their self-enacted Transportation Sales and Use Tax for both county and trunk highway projects. The MVLST helps reduce funding needs that cannot be addressed with typical sources such as the County State Aid Highway distribution.

The solution: Support the current MVLST distribution:

- 38% to greater Minnesota transit
- 38% to suburban counties
- 13% to local bridges
- 11% to the highway user tax distribution fund

ADOPT A PLAN TO CREATE EQUITY FOR BUS RAPID TRANSIT FUNDING

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.

CLOSE FREEWAY LANDFILL TO PROTECT ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC HEALTH

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 state 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.