

Delivering What Matters



Scott County



Scott County 2021 Legislative Priorities

The Scott County Board has approved the following legislative priorities for the 2021 Legislative Session. Many of these build upon previous years' positions and priorities and are shared by the County's partnering associations.

Policy Legislation



- ❖ **Support an increase in Deputy Registrar fees** to cover all costs for the services now being performed at local offices.

Why: Scott County estimates it experienced a 2.5 increase in staff overtime in 2017 due to MNLARS and the implementation of REAL and Enhanced ID. These new applications have dramatically increased lines and more than doubled wait times at our Customer Service. New fee revenue could cover the additional staff time.

- ❖ **Reform the Metropolitan Council** governance structure so it follows the principles established by the Metropolitan Governance Reform Initiative.

Why: A Council that includes local elected officials would provide greater accountability to the public. Currently, members of the Metropolitan Council are appointed by and accountable to the Governor. As a body, they will not take a position that does not align with the Governor's position. Local elected officials are already educated on housing, transportation, wastewater and parks and are prepared to take a regional perspective as Metropolitan Council members.

- ❖ **Support a Statewide solution to cover expenses associated with the disposal of E-Waste** (computers, televisions, and other electronics).

Why: Since accepting e-waste at the Scott County Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) Facility in 2007, e-waste volume has increased 1265% from 32,000 pounds to 436,500 pounds in 2019. This averages 32 pounds of e-waste for each vehicle visiting the HHW Facility. Only about 10% of Scott County households access the facility for this purpose.



❖ **Support child specific data sharing between Child Welfare, Public Health and Education**

Why: While state and federal laws provide opportunities for some data sharing regarding a student being served in public health or the child protection system, there is not the latitude for ready access to current educational data for child welfare, nor child welfare data to the child's school. Explicit language that would allow this data sharing would ease service planning and coordination across the systems for the benefit of the children and families at highest risk.



❖ **Support making select COVID -19 Health and Human Service waivers/modifications permanent including those which allow virtual visits in place of face to face.**

Why: COVID-19 provided an opportunity for our system to test operating virtually. Through this process we have learned that we can be more efficient, meet with individuals more often with saved time, better engage, have less missed appointments, and honor requests from medically vulnerable participants to limit contact. Allowing virtual visits in some circumstances and other waivers is more cost effective and can provide more frequent services to those in need.

Program Funding



HWY 169 / CR 41 Interchange—Completed 2020

❖ **Maintain the current formula for the distribution of the motor vehicle lease sales tax (MVLST) that supports Greater MN transit (38%); County State Aid Highway (CSAH) to five metro counties, including Scott, Carver, Anoka, Washington, and Dakota (38%); Highway User Distribution Fund (11%); and the MN Transportation Fund (local bridges (13%).**

Why: This funding has been the fastest growing portion of Scott County's State Aid Distribution over the last several years. In 2019 it was \$4.277 million and its projected in 2020 annual State Aid construction allocation. A significant reduction of this funding would create challenges in the County's pavement, safety, and expansion levels. The MVLST funding for the five suburban counties was included in the transportation package approved by the Legislature in 2008 as part of a "deal" to equity for the road and bridge needs of the growing suburban counties. We ask that the agreement continue to be honored.

❖ **Support a gas tax increase of seven cents, phased in over several years.**

Why: The gas tax is constitutionally dedicated 100 percent for roads and bridges. The U.S. average rate for gasoline motor fuel tax as of July 1, 2020 was 54.78 cents. Minnesota's rate is currently 47 cents. (28.5 cents MN tax, 18.5 cents federal), nearly eight cents below the national average. A seven cent per gallon increase could be implemented over several years -- such as three cents, two cents, two cents over three years -- to reduce the impact on motorists. Without additional funding, more of the burden of major projects -- especially state highway projects that intersect with local roads -- will continue to fall on local governments. This could result in higher local taxes or the continued delay of projects. Delayed projects cost the public more because of inflation plus continued safety and efficiency problems that affect the driving public.

❖ **Support state funding to advance the Highway 169/282/CR9 interchange project.**

Why: The Trunk Highway (TH) 169/TH 282/CSAH 9 intersection in Jordan is the last remaining stoplight on TH 169 between St. Peter and the north metro. The project improves safety, mobility, freight movement, and economic development on this important interregional corridor. Preliminary engineering for reconstructing the intersection into a grade separated interchange is completed. Scott County received \$7 million in funds from the 2020 Regional Solicitation of Metropolitan Council's Transportation Advisory Board, available for construction in 2025. Financial support is needed to fill the funding gap on the \$34 million proposed project. The current request is for \$2.5 million of general obligation funds, to assist with local road engineering and right-of-way acquisition.

❖ **Support Structural Change in the Distribution of Funding for Community Corrections**

Why: The Community Corrections Act (CCA) subsidy has only increased by less than 1% annually over the past 10 years despite an estimated annual cost growth of 4%. As state leaders consider criminal justice system transformation, including the intersection of criminal justice and broader public policy considerations, we strongly encourage the state to use an equitable and transparent model to determine funding levels for the CCA subsidy reimbursement by at least 4% for the biennium. This will maintain existing evidence-based practices without further erosion in the capacity of Scott County to provide those critical services.

❖ **Support increased mental health funding for the full continuum of care** including mobile crises, adult mental health initiative funding, school-based mental health grants, and funding for law enforcement and mental health dual response.

Why: Scott County has seen an increase of 10% in 911 calls related to a suicide in progress overall this year alone, with some monthly comparisons of 2019 to 2020 being up by over 50%. Some specific jurisdictions have been up more than others. For example, the Savage Police Department saw a 21% increase in the first half of 2020. Additionally, 42% of our homeless population identified as having a serious mental illness and 64% of the Scott County Jail inmates identified having a mental illness in 2020.

Mobile crisis response to the Scott County jail has also increased significantly. Scott County receives one of the lowest Adult Mental Health Initiative grants across the State, does not have sufficient crisis funding, or any funding source to provide co-response with law enforcement. We have worked diligently with community partners to create a much-needed Intensive Residential Treatment (IRTS/Crisis) facility but must expand community resources in partnership with law enforcement to effectively meet rapidly increasing mental health needs.



❖ **Support the expansion of Community Living Infrastructure Grants to improve opportunities for Minnesotans with disabilities to live in the community.**

Why: In Scott County, 63% of the homeless households identify as living with a disability. County support to create and administer programming for these households is essential in resolving homelessness and keeping some of our most vulnerable citizens safe in stable housing. Due to the limited funding of Community Living Infrastructure Grants - - which provides administrative support, housing resource specialists, and outreach for the Housing Support program - - all expansion plans have been put on hold, limiting the ability to access the state-funded housing programs for those who are eligible. Funding the grants would provide a resolution to the bottleneck in many costly systems including mental health hospitalizations, jails, residential treatment services, as well as being a key factor in impacting things like out-of-home placements and abuse/neglect of children and vulnerable adults.

❖ **Expand the Housing Support Demonstration Project** to allow for metro-wide access to Housing Support Demonstration units and increase the total capacity to serve additional people experiencing homelessness in the region.

Why: Twenty-seven percent (61% of seniors) of all homeowners and 44% of renters (about 25% of them seniors) in Scott County pay more than 30% of their income towards housing. In 2019, Scott County had 78 homeless households (45 singles and 33 families), down from 62 singles and 38 families in the first quarter due to affordable units being added. Current law limits the use of the Housing Support Demonstration Project to Anoka, Dakota, Hennepin, and Ramsey Counties and to 226 total people or “supportive housing units.” This has been in place since 1997 and has been successful in providing housing stability. We are seeking to add Carver, Scott and Washington Counties to the program in order to expand to all metropolitan counties and increase the capacity to 500 people to help those experiencing homelessness across the metro area.



❖ **Support a minimum of 40 percent of the Parks Legacy Fund be allocated to Metro Parks.**

Why: Currently, the allocation of Legacy funds for parks is: 40% for Metro Parks; 40% for DNR; and 20% for Greater MN regional parks. The increasing usage and demand upon our Metro regional parks which are – in essence – the State parks of the Metro area, requires a greater investment.

Under this formula Scott County receives approximately \$600,000 annually. Our fast-growing County relies on Legacy funding, along with local dollars, to bring meaningful regional park amenities such as trails, swimming beaches, fishing access, and other popular and necessary facilities to the community. Future funds will be needed for expansion of regional trails and park amenities and introducing services within the County’s undeveloped regional parks.



A boy using a fishing pier was overheard telling his dad, “You know what I learned this week dad? There’s more fun things to do than watching TV.”

❖ **Support ongoing efforts to identify and implement cost-saving efficiencies in state-funded programs.**

Why: Maintaining an acceptable cost of government for taxpayers means funding only those programs that can demonstrate results and are delivered in a cost-effective way. For that reason, all state-funded programs should be subject to ongoing reviews measuring effectiveness and efficiency. This evaluation must include costs of state and local bureaucratic administration weighed against a demonstration of value added.

The ongoing review of program performance data is necessary to maintain excellence in government services and to create opportunities for innovation when programs are identified as needing improvement. People and communities must be better off as a result of government services and the best opportunity for making the most meaningful impact comes when investment decisions and performance data are integrated.



SCALE, MICA, AMC Led Initiatives

Provide legislative authority to assess street infrastructure fees that improve safety and capacity for new development.

Support state funding to reimburse the federal government for any DHS payment and billing miscalculations.

Support pursuing investments for generating wetland banking credits to be available for use by counties for local road projects.

Support a bonding bill for the Local Road and Bridge Replacement Program.

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