

LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

2025

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Where the future embraces the past in keeping Carver County a great place to live, work, and play for a lifetime.



The Carver County Board of Commissioners supports local decision-making authority and opposes legislation that removes the ability for local elected officials to respond to the needs of its businesses and constituents or that restricts local decision-making authority.

Locally elected decision-makers hold the best position to determine what health, safety, and welfare regulations best serve their constituents. Like state and federal legislative leaders, local elected officials are held accountable through Minnesota's robust elections process. Ordinances at the local level are enacted only after a comprehensive, legal, and open process.

The public's access to local officials is much easier, as is attending local county board and city council meetings.

Counties are often laboratories for determining public policy approaches to the challenges that face residents and businesses. Preserving local control in our state has yielded widespread benefits such as the 2007 Freedom to Breathe Act, and an amendment to the Minnesota Clean Indoor Air Act.



2025 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

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UNFUNDED STATE & FEDERAL MANDATES

BACKGROUND -

Carver County opposes state or federal mandates and costs without full and stable funding. These unfunded mandates unfairly shift financial responsibility to counties. Examples of more than \$2 million in annual, unfunded mandates/funding shifts with the estimated cost to Carver County residents include:

- \$500,000 = Unfunded children's mental-health case management services (non-medical assistance).
- \$125,000 = Unfunded adult mental-health case management services (non-medical assistance).
- \$600,000 = "Does Not Meet Criteria" notification from state operated facilities.
- \$300,000 = After-hours coverage as the state "Safety Net" for adult and child protection/mental health crisis.
- \$200,000 = Civil commitment pre-petition screening process.
- **\$15,600** = Publication of financial statements, County Board meeting minutes, and budget hearing notices.
- \$100,000 = Providing federally mandated health benefits to pre-trial inmates.
- \$150,000 \$200,000 = Various public safety mandates, including emergency management planning and training; 911 dispatch training and equipment requirements; and detention-related costs (underfunded transportation costs, inmate custody boarding costs, inmate programming and mental-health commitment costs).

REQUESTED POSITION

State or federal legislation not accompanied with commensurate funding be revised or removed. Further, the state legislature should pass legislation to sunset all county-level mandates, reviewing each legislative item to determine if it should continue or be eliminated. Finally, all legislation impacting local government needs to include a "local impact note" to determine if it increases local government costs.

EMPLOYEE RELATIONS PRIORITIES

BACKGROUND -

Minnesota statutory changes made during recent legislative sessions impacted local government's ability to effectively manage its operations and workforce. Provisions imposed increased unfunded state mandates with direct and indirect costs, and complex requirements in the areas of employment law and labor relations, affecting ability to address and manage benefits and wages as affordable subjects of bargaining, and imposing provisions that reduce local government's ability to effectively manage workforce availability and deliver essential services.

REQUESTED POSITION

Maintain the ability of the public sector and local government to effectively manage its operations and workforce, including staffing levels, employee leave and benefits programs, and workforce management provisions through mandates, earned sick and safe time, Minnesota Paid Family Medical Leave, the Public Employment Labor Relations Act, and staffing ratios.

MANDATES

Refrain from creating, and instead reduce or eliminate increased state mandates regarding employment law, employee benefits, and labor relations matters, especially additional unfunded requirements and administrative burdens.

EARNED SICK AND SAFE TIME (ESST)

Support adjustments to ESST provisions for effective application of the law within reasonably defined and equitable parameters, and position public employers to ensure adequate staffing for delivery of essential services.

- Effective January 2025, as required under Minn. Stat., Sect. 181.9445 181.9448 and amendments per Session Laws 2024, Chapter 127, Article 11, Sects. 15-17, virtually all provisions and characteristics of ESST will expand to apply to other forms of paid time off and paid leave which can be used for personal illness or injury, made available to employees by an employer in excess of the minimum ESST hours required per Minn. Stat., Sect. 181.9446.
- Employers that provide and have collectively bargained expansive additional leave programs beyond the minimum accruals required under ESST law will, beginning in 2025, be subject to an "ESST takeover" of leave banks and leave programs that were never designed or intended for such expansive use or to be administered via rules revised by the state.
- Repeal the mandate to expand ESST provisions to apply to paid time off and paid leave hours beyond the minimum accrued ESST hours required by law.

EMPLOYEE RELATIONS PRIORITIES

MINNESOTA PAID FAMILY MEDICAL LEAVE (PFML)

Provide appropriate flexibility in Minnesota PFML law to support effective delivery of public services without added undue burden.

- Recognize the additional constriction this new mandate places on a strained workforce given
 existing challenges in staffing certain essential and public safety service areas. Support provision
 of paid leave during federal FMLA-qualifying events but allow exemptions from PFML expanded
 leave provisions in certain areas to avoid undue disruption to delivery of essential and public safety
 services to the public.
- Pursue language to clarify that employers meet the expectations and mandates of the Minnesota PFML law and shall not be required to bargain concerning, the implementation of a 50/50 split of premium payments between employer and employee. Nothing in this provision shall prohibit an employer from electing to pay a greater percentage of the premium nor does this provision prohibit unions from collectively bargaining a greater employer contribution.

PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT LABOR RELATIONS ACT (PELRA)

Streamline and reduce administrative burden and complexity of mandates requiring local governments to provide expansive reporting to unions, as well as coordinate scheduling and manage various requirements (administrative, security, scheduling, logistics, communications) related to expansive union access mandates. Protect the private personnel data of public employees by defining parameters for union use and retention of data by unions. Repeal additional timeline mandates placed on local government employers to respond to union data requests.

STAFFING RATIOS

Support the repeal of "staffing ratios" in Minn. Stats. 179A.03, Subd. 19, and reversal of changes made in Minnesota Session Laws 2023, Chapter 53, Article 11, Section 14 regarding the scope of inherent managerial policy under Minn. Stats. 179A.07, Subd. 1. Setting specific staffing levels for individual classes of employees through contractual agreements:

- Diminishes critical flexibility, efficiency, and affordability of government services.
- Promotes misalignment of staff workloads and allocation of resources over time.
- Diminishes the ability or prevents organizations from pursuing innovation, using new or different technology or methods, and sensibly reorganizing functions.
- Will result in establishment of ratios that will become ineffective and outdated as conditions change.
- And may force counties to discontinue certain functions.

HOUSING INITIATIVES

BACKGROUND .

A recent **Carver County Community Development Agency (CDA)** housing study identified a significant need for a variety of housing types for Carver County. This detailed report can be found online: carver-county.

Carver County has a long history of addressing housing needs through collaborative projects such as working with public, nonprofit, and private community partners to build West Creek in Chaska, an 18-unit affordable, supportive housing apartment complex, that opened in August 2024. This facility helped close the housing gap for qualified young adults, ages 18 to 26. Another example is Carver Place in the City of Carver which is currently under construction and will supply the local community with 60 affordable units. There are numerous other examples which illustrate that local control and coordination of efforts across the various sectors is the best model to address this difficult problem.

The state legislature is also an important partner in these efforts, but recent legislation to meet housing needs falls short. Proposed "Missing Middle" legislation would have preempted city zoning and land use authorities, removed public input in the residential development process, ignored long-range comprehensive plans, and lacked consideration for how cities utilize zoning and land use authorities ensured investments in utilities and infrastructure. In addition, the **Local Affordable Housing Aid (LAHA)** created by the 2023 legislature provided Carver County with a nominal funding amount of **\$1.6 million** with no allowance to cover administrative costs.

Finally, the 2024 legislature adopted a historic \$2.6 billion housing stability package, but Carver County's share of state funding to support those who are unhoused or are at risk of homelessness was only **\$1.5 million**. This excluded expanding the Housing Support Demonstration Project leaving Carver with only two beds (with a local bed need of 20) and resulted in Carver County expending all Emergency Assistant (EA), Local Homeless Assistant Prevention Aid (LHPA), and State Affordable Housing Aid (SAHA) funds by September of 2024.

REQUESTED POSITION

Carver County supports state legislative assistance which provides additional funding and supports the coordinated efforts of achieving a sustained and increased availability of options across the housing lifecycle. The prevailing objective for any housing initiative must prioritize local control to increase production of residential units, the preservation of existing homes, and housing stability programs for individuals and families.

LOCAL AFFORDABLE HOUSING AID (LAHA): COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS

BACKGROUND -

Local Affordable Housing Aid (LAHA) was created by the 2023 legislature. The annual appropriation for LAHA comes from a sales and use tax imposed within metropolitan counties as defined in Minnesota Statutes, section 473.121, subdivision 4. Amendments to LAHA were made by the 2024 legislature. Those amendments added additional allowable projects, among other things. As counties plan to implement projects related to the intended use for the aid, no allowance was made in the law to cover county costs of administering qualified projects.

REQUESTED POSITION

Amend applicable Minnesota Statutes to allow for up to 10 percent of LAHA funds to cover County costs related to administering LAHA projects, reporting, and other tasks related to distribution of funds.

GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS AND VEHICLE MILES TRAVELLED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

BACKGROUND -

Carver County appreciates the 2024 changes to the statute which revises the transportation greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and vehicle miles travelled (VMT) impact assessment to a portfolio, not individual project, level.

The 2023 Omnibus Transportation Finance and Policy Bill established a new requirement for an assessment of GHG emissions and VMT for grade separated interchange projects and capacity improvement projects on the trunk highway system. As enacted, the new law will apply to capacity expansion projects, which are defined as major highway projects, with a cost of \$15 million or more in the metro area, and \$5 million or more in greater Minnesota, and adds highway traffic capacity or provides for grade separation at an intersection, excluding auxiliary lanes with a length of less than 2.500 feet. For a portfolio of projects covered by the new law, if the portfolio is not in conformance with GHG and VMT reduction targets, there must be:

- 1. A change in the scope or design of the any projects within the portfolio and a revised assessment must be performed, or
- 2. Interlink sufficient impact mitigation, or
- 3. Halt the project development and disallow inclusion of the project in the STIP.

Carver County continues to lead important mobility and safety improvement projects on the State's Trunk Highway System including Highway 212, Highway 5, Highway 7, Highway 41, and Highway 101. Improvements to these transportation corridors are critical to accommodating growth and ensuring safe and reliable travel in the region. The county invests millions in local revenue to fund these projects so adding the burden to mitigate for Greenhouse Gas impacts or increases in VMT puts additional burden on the county for state owned infrastructure.

REQUESTED POSITION

Carver County supports limiting the greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and vehicle miles traveled (VMT) assessments to trunk highway corridors only and requests the legislature establish additional funding to pay for mitigation efforts so they will not have to be included in the costs of individual projects.

METROPOLITAN COUNCIL'S PARK FUTURE REIMBURSEMENT PROGRAM

BACKGROUND -

Since the early 1990s, the Parks Future Reimbursement Program has enabled implementing agencies to request council approval to acquire land and develop regional parks (and trails) using agency funds and then be eligible for reimbursement in the future using council tax exempt bonds (no state funding has supported this program). The Parks Future Reimbursement Program is part of the council's Regional Parks Bonding Program and has policy guidance from the Regional Parks Policy Plan and the Parks Fund Distribution Policy.

In 2021, the council stopped reimbursing agencies for certain eligible expenses because the Metropolitan Council's Bond Counsel determined that the Parks Future Reimbursement Program did not comply with IRS regulations. Since 2021, council and agency parks staff have unsuccessfully brainstormed potential new options to restart reimbursing agencies for all eligible expenses.

According to council records, \$8.6 million in Carver County taxpayer funds have been spent on eligible expenses (primarily acquiring land for Lake Waconia Regional Park) but Carver County has only received \$4.4 million from the Parks Future Reimbursement Program, which means Carver County taxpayers have not been reimbursed for **\$4.2 million** in eligible expenses.

REQUESTED POSITION

Support legislation to reimburse Carver County taxpayers for spending **\$4.2 million** acquiring land and developing regional parks and trails.

SUPPORT FOR PHASE III OF THE LAKE WACONIA REGIONAL PARK DEVELOPMENT

BACKGROUND •

Lake Waconia Regional Park is a 160-acre Metropolitan Regional Park, minimally developed, and located on the second largest lake in the Twin Cities area. Carver County received past funding from the state for the phased development of Lake Waconia Regional Park.

In 2018, the county received \$1.5 million of state bonds for phase I of the park development, which included site grading, installation of municipal utility lines, and the construction of roadways and parking lots.

In 2020, the County received an additional \$2.5 million of state bonds for phase II of development. The funds were secured helped construct a new waterfront pavilion with restrooms, rental concessions, and assist in making utility connections. Carver County provided **\$7 million**, 70 percent of the project costs, in local funds towards phase I and phase II developments.

REQUESTED POSITION

Provide **\$3.264 million** in state funds for predesign, design, and construction of a playground, parking lot, trails, walkways, fishing piers, and other site amenities at Lake Waconia Regional Park.

SUPPORT FOR THE REGIONAL PARK SYSTEM BONDING BILL

BACKGROUND -

The Metropolitan Council's Regional Park Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) is based on the issuance of up to \$10 million of Metropolitan Council bonds to provide a 40 percent match to a 2025 state bond request of \$15 million. This results in a 2025 CIP requested total for the Metropolitan Regional Park System of **\$25 million**.

REQUESTED POSITION

Support legislation which provides up to \$25 million for the Regional Park CIP for 2025. \$15 million of state bonds are to be matched with \$10 million of Metropolitan Council bonds for a combined total of **\$25 million** for the Metropolitan Regional Parks System.

PARKS & TRAILS LEGACY FUNDING

BACKGROUND -

Parks and Trails Legacy Funding was established in 2012 and is funded with the 3/8th of 1 percent sales tax that is administered by the agencies of the State Park System, Metropolitan Regional Park System, and the Greater Minnesota Regional Park System.

THE FUNDING SPLIT INCLUDES:

- .25 percent off the top for coordination among partners for marketing and promotional efforts for all parks and trails of state or regional significance.
- .25 percent off the top to fund resources to establish criteria to allocate Legacy Funds.

THE REMAINDER TO BE SPLIT:

- 40 percent Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.
- 40 percent Metropolitan Regional Parks and Trails.
- 20 percent Greater Minnesota Regional Parks.

Carver County receives approximately \$600,000 annually to fund park and trail capital improvements, asset management of its regional park facilities, providing recreation programs, and other forms of public parks and recreation outreach activities.

REQUESTED POSITION

The Metropolitan area generates substantially more sales tax revenue than it receives through Parks and Trail Legacy Funding. Further, the Regional Park System generates substantially more users than the Greater Minnesota Regional Park System. Ideally, the funding should be split by sales tax generated or by annual parks and trail usage figures. Funding from SFY 2026 and 2027 Parks and Trail Legacy funding shall be no less than 40 percent to the Metropolitan Regional Parks and Trails.

OPERATIONS & MAINTENANCE FUNDING FOR REGIONAL PARKS

BACKGROUND -

Carver County receives a portion of its Operations and Maintenance (O&M) funding for the regional parks it administers. O & M funding comes from funding sources of the state general fund.

Carver County supports the request of the Metropolitan Council of \$9,140,000 in state funds for O & M funding of regional parks. The amount is the same as requested in 2023.

In past years Regional Park Implementing Agencies received approximately 9 percent of their O & M expenditures from the state. For Carver County, the anticipated funding amount is approximately \$200,000.

BENEFITS

- Reduces County property tax to maintain its regional parks.
- · Continues a satisfactory levels of park services.
- · Helps off-set cost of by users outside of Carver County.

REQUESTED POSITION

Support legislation for Operations and Maintenance expenditures for regional parks.

MENTAL HEALTH: DOES NOT MEET MEDICAL CRITERIA (DNMC)

BACKGROUND

Beds at state-operated facilities continue to be at capacity and there are Carver County residents "stuck" in beds that are at a higher level of care than is needed but they are unable to move to a lesser level of care bed because there are not adequate beds in state-operated facilities available. Carver County was being billed 100 percent of the cost of care for one individual when the 2023 state legislature granted relief to counties for these costs for those civilly committed Mentally III and Dangerous (MI&D). The state legislature seemed to understand that counties are powerless to expand state capacity and powerless when an individual is "stuck" in that high level of care with nowhere else to safely go. Charging counties for this cost only removes dollars from the County that instead could be used to support mental health needs locally.

REQUESTED POSITION

- The legislation passed (Minnesota Statute §246.54, Subd. 1a & 1b) only granted financial relief for counties from July 1, 2023, through June 30, 2025. Carver County requests that the legislation passed in 2023 be amended to eliminate the end date of the relief and instead make that relief permanent and ongoing, essentially ending the county's cost share.
- Carver County requests that the 2025 legislature pass relief for Carver County's DNMC debt incurred between July 1, 2022, and June 30, 2023, for those who were "stuck" in a state-operated facility due to lack of bed capacity at another state-operated facility. For Carver County, that cost equals \$518,130.

CHILD PROTECTION AND JUSTICE-INVOLVED YOUTH: MAJOR BARRIERS FOR APPROPRIATE CARE

BACKGROUND

The 2023 legislature established and tasked a working group on youth interventions to evaluate the out-of-home placement options in Minnesota for youth adjudicated to be either in need of protection or services through the child protection or juvenile delinquency system (2023 Minnesota Session Law, Chapter 62, Article 2, §119) and develop recommendations. The Carver County Health and Human Services Director was one of the metro representatives on the working group. The working group submitted a final report in February 2024 to the legislature, but no action was taken in response to that report during the 2024 legislative session. Most of the metro counties have come together and are working to explore a metro-area approach to address the lack of placement options for youth served by our counties. Most are either justice-involved or have child protection involvement or both and have high behavioral health needs.

REQUESTED POSITION

Support regional cost-effective evidenced-based solutions outlined in the "Working Group on Youth Interventions" report, for example:

- Align licensing and certification requirements for facilities and programs, both in human services and corrections, to strengthen the continuum of care and support healthy outcomes for youth involved in the system.
- Ensure expanded capacity in state-operated facilities.
- Allocate ongoing funding for culturally appropriate, intensely therapeutic, community-based placement options for youth involved in the justice/child protection system.
- Provide funding for the creation of community-based services that allow youth to receive supports close to their home and family.

MnCHOICES: REDUCE THE FREQUENCY OF REASSESSMENTS

BACKGROUND

What is MnCHOICES? A person-centered assessment to help people with long-term or chronic-care needs make care decisions and select support and service options to remain safely in their home or community-based living facility.

We need to simplify the assessment process. For many years, the State of Minnesota has attempted to revise the assessment tool that determines service and support eligibility for persons with disabilities or related conditions or older adults (those ages 65+). As the tool moved from a paper document to an electronic assessment (version 1.0) and now to version 2.0, it has become clear that assessments are cumbersome, difficult for assessors to use, fraught with system issues, and are taking significantly longer to complete, creating a **multi-month wait list** in almost all Minnesota counties for initial assessments (12 months in Carver).

These lengthy assessments are challenging and time-consuming for residents to participate in and at times require multiple visits from the assessor. When a consumer is stable, doesn't want, and doesn't need an annual reassessment, they should be allowed the choice to reduce the frequency of receiving a reassessment and delay their reassessment for up to three years. Knowing that if a change in condition occurs, an assessment can be requested and completed at any time.

THIS CHANGE WOULD:

- 1. Provide relief to individuals and families who sit through lengthy unnecessary reassessments.
- 2. Enable MnCHOICES assessors to divert their time to be more responsive to initial assessment requests thus reducing the current wait list.
- 3. Address County workforce issues by slowing the need to add additional FTEs to complete this work.

REQUESTED POSITION

- Support state legislation directing Minnesota Department of Human Services (MN-DHS) to seek all necessary federal authority (pursue a federal demonstration waiver) through Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to simplify the MnCHOICES reassessment process.
- Support state legislation allowing for the frequency reduction of MnCHOICES reassessments and update of Minnesota Statute §256B.0911 accordingly.
- Support state legislation to sunset the County cost share for MnCHOICES administration and revert the 50 percent state share back to the state to share equally with the federal government.

CHILD PROTECTION: MINNESOTA AFRICAN AMERICAN FAMILY PRESERVATION ACT (MAAFPA)

BACKGROUND

The 2024 African American Family Preservation and Child Welfare Disproportionality Act (MAAFPA) was signed into law (Minnesota Statutes §260.61 to §260.693) with an effective date of January 1, 2027. MAAFPA is an impactful and bold change for our system, and when engaged in significant changes, significant financial investments are necessary to ensure successful outcomes for all Minnesota families. The child protection system is one of the most complex social systems in our society, governed by both federal and state policy, involving a myriad of partners including law enforcement, judges, attorneys, child welfare workers, and community partners.

The application of the "Active Efforts" standard will apply to approximately 90 percent of all Carver County child protection cases. Active efforts require more of the County staff who work with families - more time and more resources. Lower caseload sizes will be needed to accommodate the staff time needed to properly apply the standard which will result in the need for more staff. More supervisory time will be needed to support an increase in staffing.

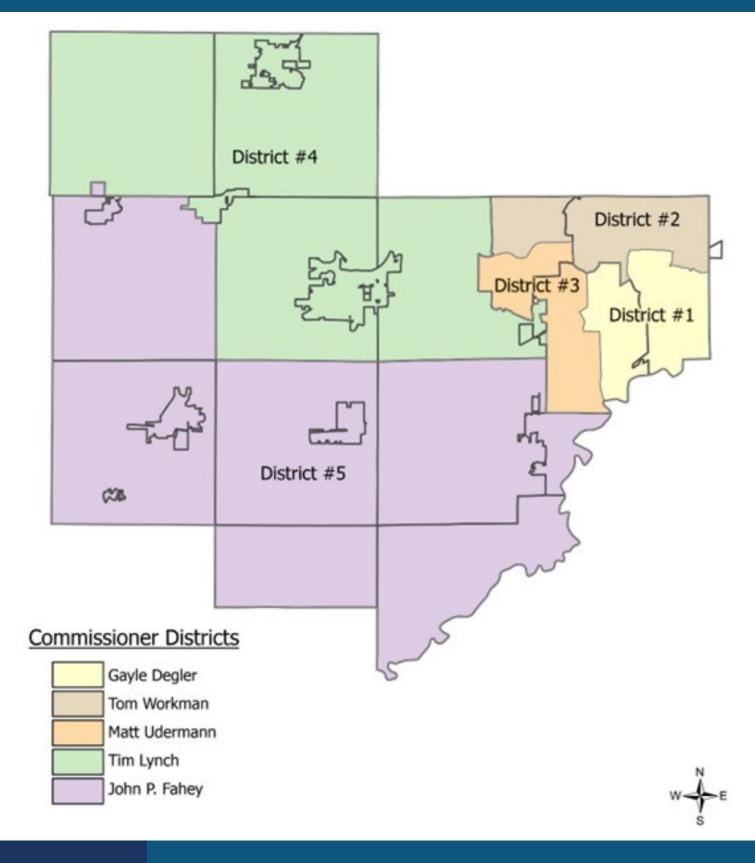
"Active Efforts" will require the County to provide financial support to MAAFPA families with dollars for transportation (e.g., gas cards), housing (rent, utilities, mortgages), and household and daily living expenses, for example. The County will need to financially invest in creating culturally specific services and securing culturally specific providers to meet the requirements of the law.

Sixteen separate and district elements are currently not built into SSIS (the state software) that are required as a part of MAAFPA. With anticipating an increase in expenses, services, data analysis, and contracting, investments in administrative support will be required to meet office support, program oversight, and billing requirements.

REQUESTED POSITION

- Allocate adequate funding to counties during the 2025 legislative session (since it is a budget year) to meet the basic requirements of the law when it goes into effect statewide on January 1, 2027. Carver County has evaluated the current cases that would fall under MAAFPA, if it were effective today, and estimates an additional cost to the county of \$2.8 million to implement and meet MAAFPA statutory requirements.
- Allocate funding to the State of Minnesota to update software (SSIS) to allow for efficient capture of the data required under the law.

CARVER COUNTY MAP OF DISTRICTS



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