



Association of
Minnesota Counties

LEGISLATIVE POLICY PRIORITIES

Adopted by AMC Board 12/03/2017

2018

PRIORITIES

Environment and Natural Resources:

Land Acquisitions

Background: The issue of acquiring private lands with state funding has been a hotly debated topic at the Legislature the last few sessions. Granting agencies such as the Lessard Sams Outdoor Heritage Council have also recently discussed application procedures and best practices for land acquisitions.

Staff Analysis: With these discussions already occurring, AMC decided it would be timely to form a work group to further examine all public lands issues from the county perspective and to determine if AMC should consider and/or pursue any new policy recommendations to address some of the concerns. The AMC Public Lands Management Work Group met three times during the summer/fall and this policy was one of five positions developed by the work group that had group consensus. AMC believes that early and enhanced communication on state-funded land acquisition projects would help address many of the concerns county boards encounter with respect to land acquisitions. A notification requirement to county boards prior to approval and funding of the project would allow for dialogue and problem-solving early in the acquisition process to result in win-win situations for all parties involved.

AMC supports requiring that county boards be notified of, and allowed to comment on, applications for state-funded acquisition projects that are proposed in the county.

Health and Human Services:

Minnesota Eligibility Technology System (METS)

Background: Today, nearly one million Minnesotans are enrolled in Medical Assistance (MA) or MinnesotaCare. Counties are responsible for determining eligibility for these programs. METS was created to be an automated system to address the increased volume resulting from MA expansion. This system has proven to be technologically inefficient requiring counties to invest in increased staff to ensure productivity requirements are met.

Staff Analysis: Counties want our eligibility system to be one that is one of integrity, where individuals are receiving the appropriate services. Periodic Data matching (PDM) will help accomplish this, however it cannot be accomplished with a system that does not function. Given concern with the recent roll out of MNLARS, and a field test being identified as a means by which the roll out could have been run more smoothly with better results for counties and consumers, AMC is seeking legislation that will require a field test of the technology associated with completing PDM successfully before a complete roll out statewide.

AMC supports legislation that would require a field test of periodic data matching before full scale implementation to ensure functionality of the technology system.



Health and Human Services/Public Safety:

Mental Health Bonding

Background: There are proposals at the legislature to use bonding for mental health infrastructure to help enhance the current system. These proposals would benefit counties in multiple ways. The triage center approach would reduce the number of people in mental health crisis that are brought to the jail as a last resort. The housing funds would create additional opportunities for moving individuals out of the Anoka Metro Regional Treatment Center in a more timely manner, reducing the cost share pressure on county budgets.

Staff Analysis: Solutions to these issues continue to be challenging. There are multiple areas within the system for which additional resources should be allocated. With this year being a “bonding year” and a champion already identified for these proposals, it makes sense for AMC to focus our efforts toward making them a reality and while they won’t resolve all of the issues facing the mental health system, it is a meaningful step forward.

Public Safety:

Opioids

Background: This plank would include assuring that any efforts to spend resources on combatting the opioid epidemic include counties and resources be shared with county partners. This would also include a review and potential changes to statute to allow for all types of first responders to carry and administer Narcan (Naloxone) and to be sure that any county employee with regular contact with a high risk population have liability protection for administering Narcan.

Staff Analysis: This is very timely for this session given the attention focused on the issue by the media as well as policy makers from all levels of government. Opioid related overdose deaths increased 18% from 2015 to 2016 and the most recent data suggests that it will increase again in 2017. In addition to potential financial resources for prevention and treatment, this issue also offers the possibility for policy changes that do not require additional funding, increasing the likelihood of success in a non-budget legislative session.

Transportation & Infrastructure:

Broadband Development

Funding

Background: The Legislature has traditionally provided funding for the Border-to-Border Broadband Grant Program on an annual basis, rather than over the biennium. Last session, the Legislature included \$20 million for the program in 2018; the Office of Broadband Development received 70 applications this grant cycle totaling over \$50 million in requests for broadband infrastructure projects throughout the state.

Staff Analysis: AMC should join other advocates in asking the Legislature to fund the grant program in 2019 based on the one-time appropriation (rather than biennial), the high volume of applications received already, and the need for additional resources to achieve true border to border broadband in Minnesota.

AMC supports bonding proposals that strengthen the mental health continuum of care through regional triage centers for crisis intervention, and the creation of new housing options.

AMC supports providing the resources necessary to improve the public safety response to the opioid epidemic.

AMC supports the build-out of broadband infrastructure in Minnesota, including legislation that would provide continued funding for the Border-to-Border Broadband Development Grant Program.



Transportation & Infrastructure:

Transportation Funding

Background: The Legislature passed a comprehensive transportation funding bill last session, which included general fund revenue shifts from the sales tax on auto parts, general obligation bonding money, and transfer of the entire amount of the Motor Vehicle Lease Sales Tax (MVLST) to transportation. The bill included \$235 million in new revenue for roads and bridges and an additional \$71 million in general fund dollars for Metropolitan Area Transit. Despite this additional funding, the bill did not include a substantial increase in funding from any constitutionally dedicated sources. AMC must continue to be active in educating legislators and advocating for long-term funding; the solution should be comprehensive (multi-modal), balanced (regionally and between modes), sustainable (on-going funding), and dedicated (constitutionally for roads and statutorily for transit).

Staff Analysis: Going into a bonding year, it will be important for AMC to support funding for transportation related bonding programs. Last year, the Legislature passed a nearly one-billion-dollar bonding bill to make up for the lack of a bonding bill in 2016. The bill included a record amount of funding for the Local Road Improvement Program and the Local Bridge Replacement Program, though the funding for each program was almost entirely earmarked for specific projects. The waiting list of roads and bridges seeking funding from these programs continues to grow. It will be important for AMC to support a robust bonding bill in the 2018 Session that adequately funds the local road and bridge programs as well as the Local Road Wetland Replacement Program.

AMC supports continued comprehensive transportation funding that includes new revenue for roads, bridges, and transit.

For more information, please contact AMC's Intergovernmental Services Staff

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Health & Human Services

Vacant. Please contact Anne Kilzer in the interim.