

Washington State Association of County Engineers

Legislative Priorities 2023

UPDATED ON DEC. 13, 2022

WSACE recently commissioned a study regarding the ability of current County revenue sources to support County transportation system needs. The conclusions are concerning.

“Without changes, counties will be unable to invest fully in roadway and bridge preservation, fish passage barrier removal, ADA access, safety, and active transportation. Deferred maintenance will grow, leading to deteriorating road conditions, potential safety hazards, and escalating catch-up costs.”

“As an order of magnitude estimate, total road deferred maintenance costs for all counties are roughly between \$4.7 billion and \$6.3 billion—around five to six times total annual transportation expenditures across all counties.”

Source: BERK, 2020

Therefore, counties propose the following:

Prioritize Preservation and Maintenance Activities and Programs

Counties believe the maintenance and preservation of our transportation system should be the foremost priority of transportation investments statewide.

Ensure Basic Infrastructure Funding

Protect the Public Works Assistance Account (PWAA) by allowing current revenue diversions to sunset June 30, 2023 and support critical local infrastructure projects by allocating \$425M from the PWAA for Public Works Board Funding Cycles.

Fish Barrier Removal Projects

Counties support funding a comprehensive and coordinated statewide program; prioritizing both watersheds and species to determine the removal of state, local, and private barriers to maximize habitat recovery. Please support fully funding the Brian Abbott Fish Barrier Removal Board's project list in the Capital Budget.

Increase State Shared Revenue

As owners of 50% of the transportation system, Counties should receive a more equitable share of revenue designed to fund state-wide transportation needs. As gas tax revenue declines, Counties support exploring new revenue streams, including the implementation of a Road Usage Charge; provided that any new revenue is equally and proportionally shared with Counties and restricted to expenditures exclusively for highway purposes by the 18th Amendment of the State Constitution.

Targeted Increases to the Rural Arterial Program (RAP), County Arterial Preservation Program (CAPP), and the Reducing Rural Roadway Departures Program

The RAP, CAPP, and Reducing Rural Roadway Departures programs all provide valuable revenue to county road departments through prioritized, targeted, and transparent means.

Federal Fund Exchange Program

Federal funding is vital to the success of county transportation programs. The Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) program funds critical preservation and maintenance activities counties desperately need. However, federal funds often come with added requirements, resulting in heftier price tags and longer timelines for local projects. As in other states, WSACE proposes swapping our sub-allocation of federal STBG funds for state transportation revenue. This would save local jurisdictions time and resources on project delivery, allowing for a more efficient use of scarce transportation dollars.

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