

# 2019 STATE Legislative Priorities



STRONG FAMILIES



HEALTH CARE



SAFE COMMUNITIES



ACHIEVEMENT AND EMPLOYMENT



TRANSPORTATION AND TRANSIT



GENERAL GOVERNMENT



PARKS AND LIBRARIES



CAPITAL INVESTMENTS



## Vision

A vibrant community where all are valued and thrive.

## Mission

A county of excellence working with you to enhance our quality of life.

## Goals



WELL-BEING

**Strengthen individual, family and community health, safety and well-being**

through effective safety-net services, innovative programming, prevention and early intervention, and environmental stewardship.



PROSPERITY

**Cultivate economic prosperity and invest in neighborhoods with concentrated financial poverty**

through proactive leadership and inclusive initiatives that engage all communities in decisions about our future.



OPPORTUNITY

**Enhance access to opportunity and mobility for all residents and businesses**

through connections to education, employment and economic development throughout our region.



ACCOUNTABILITY

**Model fiscal accountability, transparency and strategic investments**

through professional operations and financial management.

Information about how the county is pursuing its mission and goals is available in the county's Strategic Plan at [ramseycounty.us/strategicplan](https://ramseycounty.us/strategicplan)

Information about performance measures related to the county's mission and goals is available in the county's Open Performance portal at [openperformance.ramseycounty.us](https://openperformance.ramseycounty.us)

## Legislative guiding principles

These legislative guiding principles provide a foundation for the specific initiatives and support items that are included in the 2019 State Legislative platform. In a field as dynamic as the legislative session, these basic tenets inform Ramsey County's response to legislative proposals as they are introduced and move through the process.

### Residents-First Focus

- Prioritize support for legislative proposals that clearly improve how government works with and serves Ramsey County residents.
- Evaluate the impact of legislative proposals on residents and provide opportunities for affected communities to publicly discuss and influence legislation.

### Responsible, Responsive Government

- Communicate openly with the public and operate transparently.
- Observe good data practices to protect individual privacy and provide access to public data.
- Equalize access to government resources, opportunity and services across all communities.
- Respond proactively to address the needs of vulnerable children and adults and at-risk families who are experiencing instability and difficulty in meeting basic needs.
- Tend to ongoing maintenance and planning for future infrastructure needs.
- Advance information/data technology and ongoing updates that support program integrity and efficient service delivery.
- Increase citizen access to the polls and voting participation.
- Engage in good stewardship of natural resources.
- Encourage inter-governmental collaboration built on the goals of improving performance, increasing efficiencies and building trust across programs, governmental agencies and communities.
- Support local authority to define local priorities.

### Stable, Sufficient Funding

- Allocate adequate state funding to counties to carry out state mandates.
- Distribute funding equitably, based on fair and practical distribution formulas.
- Acknowledge county costs for existing or new state mandates.
- Support county innovations in the delivery of mandated service when efficiencies can be gained.
- Respect local government control of their resources and budgetary processes.
- Expend funds for the purposes for which they are collected or allocated.

### Practice-Based Policy

- Invest in practice-based policies that include ongoing assessment and adjustments to improve effectiveness of services and to save tax dollars.
- Emphasize prevention and early intervention.
- Promote stable families, safe neighborhoods, public safety, health and wellness by engaging individual and community strength.
- Foster economic development, broad access to education and training, and growth of living-wage jobs.
- Pursue policy that is not impinged by excessive, unnecessary regulation.

# RAMSEY COUNTY

## 2019 State Legislative Platform

### Funding and Policy Priorities



#### **Strong Families**

Support state investment in services that promote healthy families and provide the essentials for early development. Support sufficient funding to provide prevention, early intervention and crisis services to protect at-risk families, children and vulnerable adults.

#### **Child Protection and Well-Being**

Continue to update the state-directed/county-managed child protection system, including policy, practice, financing and staffing, with attention to racial disparities and early intervention efforts that recognize the primacy of early childhood development and the importance of stable, nurturing families.

- **Promote the Two-Generation Approach in State and County Services.**

The Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) is currently meeting with state, county and community partners to explore establishing five pilot projects based on a two-generational approach. One of the pilots will be in Ramsey County with the St. Paul Promise Neighborhood program. With its partners, DHS will examine pilot outcomes and produce a report and recommendations to the legislature to expand programs of this type statewide. To support families in a more wholistic way, planning grants would be focused on systematic barriers and challenges. It is anticipated that the outcomes of the pilot projects will demonstrate that investing in two-generation efforts advances economic security for children, parents and families statewide.

**LEAD:** Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS).

- **NEW: Support Efforts to Examine and Address Racial Disparities in Out-of-Home Placement of Children involved in CHIPS Cases.**

While the number of out-of-home placements and the financial costs for the state and counties has received considerable attention in recent years, continued examination, reforms and funding are needed. Statewide, 15,000 children were placed in out-of-home care (2016). Compared to white children, American Indian and African-American children are significantly more likely to be placed in out-of-home care. County social services supervise 86 percent of these placements. Case management and support services need to accommodate cultural differences, address challenges and build on strengths to remedy the disproportionate placements of children of color into foster care and other out-of-home placements.

**LEAD:** Minnesota Association of County Social Service Administrators (MACCSA).

- **NEW: Support the Full Distribution of County Child Protection State Grant Allocations Statewide (discontinue withholds based on meeting certain performance benchmarks).** Each year, the Department of Human Services withholds 20 percent of the state child protection grant allocated to each county, releasing it only when a county achieves certain performance measures. This practice compounds the difficulties a county may be experiencing in meeting benchmarks. Counties are still trying to make up for the deep cuts made in the early 2000s to child welfare funding. The full allocation of the child protection state grant should be regarded as a funding base for this service-intensive mission.  
**LEAD:** Minnesota Association of County Social Service Administrators (MACCSA).

### Family Home Visiting

- **NEW: Increase Resources and Build a Strong Infrastructure for Quality Targeted Home Visiting Programs and Services.** Targeted home visiting programs work with families who are identified as needing intense support to provide the kind of home environment that supports healthy child development. This early prevention program is time tested, providing excellent results and significantly decreases spending for deep-end social services. Maintaining current funding streams, increasing the types of home visiting programs that can be supported with these funds and increasing funding for home visiting to families living in poverty (up to 185 percent of the federal poverty level) are needed to reach more families and enhance the range of services available.  
**LEAD:** Minnesota Coalition for Targeted Home Visiting.

### Child Care

- **Maximize the Use of All Available Child Care Subsidy Funds through Strategic Wait-List Changes.** The current prioritization of families on the waiting list for child care subsidies puts low-income, working families who have not used Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) at a disadvantage in securing a subsidy. This proposal would better utilize all child care subsidy funding streams and allow more families to receive this essential work-related support.  
**LEAD:** **Ramsey County** and Hennepin County.
- **NEW: Support State Investments to Encourage Start-up and Ongoing Support for Child Care Providers.** A critical shortage of childcare across the state, particularly in rural areas and areas of concentrated poverty in urban cores, has prompted discussion at the legislature to examine contributing factors and possible solutions. Industry cites several examples of abandoning new development or expansion of existing operations because childcare was not available in surrounding areas. Counties support innovative policies and funding that reward business and community investment in quality childcare.  
**LEAD:** Department of Human Services (DHS) and Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED).
- **NEW: Support Child Care Licensing Practices that Consistently Prioritize Child Safety and that also Support the Successful Operation of Quality Child Care Providers.** Last year, the Minnesota Legislature's health and human services committees considered family child care licensing and oversight changes in response to provider complaints alleging uneven interpretation of rules by state and county licensing staff. Legislators have indicated they will continue to pursue licensing changes to clarify and simplify rules and promote improved relations between child care providers and regulators. The Department of Human Services and counties support focused training refinements, county liability insurance reforms, and continued prioritization of child safety in all child care settings.  
**LEAD:** Minnesota Association of County Social Services Administrators (MACCSA) and the Department of Human Services.

## Child Support

- **Clarify Ambiguity and Correct Error in Child Support Reforms Adopted in 2016.**  
After the 2016 state legislature made changes to the parenting expense adjustment (PEA), it was discovered that several clarifications need to be made:
  1. Minnesota case law and statute relating to child support modification are inconsistent. Clarifications are necessary to help families get their child support orders modified to fit the new PEA law.
  2. The language related to one-parent support when a child is not living with either parent, but is living with another caretaker, contains unintentional errors and needs to be aligned with the intent of what was passed by the legislature.**LEAD:** Child Support Guidelines Task Force.
  
- **Reconcile the Annual Child Support Collection Fee with the Recent Federal Increase.**  
Last year, a federal law was enacted that increases the annual child support collection fee from \$25 to \$35 per family. Enabling legislation must be passed to initiate the increase in Minnesota. Without this change, counties will lose more than \$400,000 in federal funding statewide each year. This funding is crucial to counties for their operation of the federally-mandated, state-delegated child support collection program in Minnesota.  
**LEAD:** Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC).

## Senior and Disability Services

- **NEW: Address the DWRS Federal Disallowance of State Rate Increases.**  
The federal Center for Medicaid/Medicare Services issued a ruling last year that disallowed approximately seven percent of the increases Minnesota added to their Disability Waivered Services Rate (DWRS) paid to providers caring for individuals enrolled in a waived service program. Center for Medicare/Medicaid Services (CMS) and the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) said that these increases were duplicative of the inflationary rate increases that occurred over the same time period. If the state does not replace this lost federal funding, providers of services will face shortfalls in their budgets, which in turn may reduce the availability of services to individuals with disabilities.  
**LEAD:** The Best Life Alliance.
  
- **NEW: Provide for Protection of Seniors and Other Vulnerable Adults in Nursing Homes and Assisted Living Facilities.**  
In the 2018 session, the legislature engaged in a major push to address the surge in the number of complaints filed with the Department of Health regarding neglect and maltreatment of vulnerable seniors residing and receiving care in nursing homes and other senior care facilities. Oversight changes were adopted but reforms fell far short of those sought by advocates. Preventative measures that include enhanced protections need to be adopted, but personal privacy and choice should not be needlessly compromised.  
**LEAD:** Department of Human Services (DHS).

## Veterans

- **NEW: Increase State Funding for the County Veteran Services Office.**  
State funding for county Veteran's Services Offices is essential for the availability of services to veterans in communities across the state. County funding for these services has increased through the years and the state's contribution needs to keep pace with needs as well.  
**LEAD:** Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC).

## Housing

The gap between the need for affordable housing and the availability is growing rapidly in communities across the state. The shortage increases costs, compounding the problem and pricing more low-income families and individuals out of the market and into unsafe, substandard housing or worse yet, into homelessness. Broad government and community investments are needed to address this urgent issue.

- **NEW: Increase Funding for Existing Housing Programs Focused on Specific Populations.** In communities across the state, there isn't enough affordable housing. While the current housing market makes it very difficult for a significant number of individuals and families to secure safe, adequate housing, there are additional barriers for some populations. Those with low incomes face the biggest challenge. Affordability is the number one factor when looking for a home. People experiencing mental illness, or who have another disability, families with children, veterans and those who are homeless often need a hand in obtaining and keeping housing. Funding for traditional government housing programs needs to be increased and creative housing solutions should be further explored. Without these further investments, homelessness will continue to rise steeply across Minnesota.  
**LEAD:** Homes for All and the Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC).
- **NEW: Create a Dedicated Fund for the Development of Affordable Housing Statewide.** The cost to build affordable housing under current state and federal programs is increasing. Incentives and funding are needed to attract private developers. The Minnesota Housing Partnership is working with other advocates to advance the creation of the Minnesota Tax Credit Contribution Fund. The fund enrolls private investors into the production of affordable housing. In addition to providing financial benefit to investors, the new housing benefits local businesses, creates jobs and contributes to the overall growth of the economy.  
**LEAD:** Minnesota Housing Partnership and the Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC).



## Health Care

### Health Care Access

- **NEW: Support Continuation of the Two Percent Health Care Provider Tax.** The two percent tax on gross revenue of medical providers, hospitals, and drug distributors will sunset at the end of 2019. Revenue from this tax is the primary source of funding for the Health Care Access Fund (HCAF), which was established to increase access to health care for low income Minnesotans and to finance MinnesotaCare. HCAF also provides funding to the Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP), specific Medical Assistance costs and DHS program administration. After the planned sunset, revenue in the HCAF, is expected to expire in 2022. Repeal of the sunset and the continuation of the provider tax or replacement with other state funding is essential for supporting the gains made to-date in health care prevention and access growth currently supported by the health care provider tax.  
**LEAD:** Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC).
- **Continue to Improve Health Care Access for All Residents.** Insurance costs are surging, threatening access for many people, especially those who recently gained coverage because of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and expansion of Medical Assistance in Minnesota. Health care access needs to be maintained and core elements of the ACA need to be preserved, including coverage for dependents up to age 26, the prohibition of denial of coverage for pre-existing conditions and the prohibition of lifetime caps for coverage.  
**LEAD:** Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC).

## Public Health

- Support Adequate Funding for SHIP.**  
 Enacted in 2008, the Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP) is an integral component of Minnesota’s bipartisan and nation-leading health care reform legislation designed to reduce chronic disease and health care costs. Ramsey County has the highest rate of premature death in the metro area, with communities of color disproportionately impacted. SHIP is funded in large part by the Health Care Access Fund, which derives its funds from a state two percent health care provider tax. The tax is set to sunset at the end of calendar year 2019. Continuation of this tax or replacement funding is essential to maintaining the success achieved to-date by SHIP.  
**LEAD:** Local Public Health Association (LPHA).
- Support Increased Funding for Local Public Health Grants.**  
 Ramsey County depends on the Local Public Health Grant as a foundation to support public health programs/services, surveillance and prevention efforts. In order to meet growing community needs, these grants need to be increased.  
**LEAD:** Local Public Health Association (LPHA).

## Technology System Updates

- Increase Funding for the Minnesota Eligibility and Technology System (METS).**  
 Increased funding is needed to improve the computer system that counties must use to assess applicant eligibility for health care programs and to efficiently identify and correct errors. Technology improvements are needed to assist financial aid workers following eligibility updates, increased demands for services and the addition of state-mandated data matching activities.  
**LEAD:** Minnesota Association of Social Service Administrators (MACSSA).

## Mental and Chemical Health

- NEW: Allocate State Funding to Replace Lost Federal Funding for Children’s Residential Mental Health Treatment Facilities.**  
 The federal Center for Medicaid and Medicare Services recently announced that it will no longer reimburse for mental health services delivered by residential mental health facilities to children in Minnesota. CMS is now defining these intensive services as Institutes for Mental Disease (IMD); CMS does not pay for services delivered by IMDs. Without this coverage, counties will have to bear the full cost of these services provided to their residents.  
**LEAD:** Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC).
- NEW: Support Changes to the County Cost Share for AMRTC and Community Behavioral Health Hospitals.**  
 Counties are responsible for paying 100 percent of the cost of care for their residents placed at the Anoka-Metro Regional Treatment Center (AMRTC) and the community behavioral health hospitals (CBHH) once the facility deems hospital-level care is no longer required. In 2017, county costs statewide were \$14.8 million at the AMRTC and nearly \$4 million for non-acute days at a CBHH. Counties support legislation moved (but not passed) last year that would constrain the cost shares by: 1) requiring notice to counties of patient readiness for discharge, 2) creating a standard wait list process, 3) shifting costs to the state when a discharge delay is due to unnecessary state delay and, 4) expanding the appeals process for counties to seek redress from the state.  
**LEAD:** Minnesota Association of County Social Services Administrators (MACSSA).

- Develop Additional Community-Based Mental Health Placement Options and Services.**  
 When counties place an individual in a state-operated facility for mental health or competency restoration services, the county currently must pay an increasing portion of the costs for that individual's care after inpatient-level care is no longer deemed necessary. One of the main reasons for longer stays in state facilities is the critical shortage of appropriate community care settings to which people can be discharged. To begin to address this underlying problem, county payments should be specifically designated for the development of community alternatives.  
**LEAD:** Minnesota Association of County Social Services Administrators (MACSSA).
- Revise the Civil Commitment Statute to Improve the Response to Defendants Who Are Experiencing Mental Illness.**  
 Under Minnesota's judicial system, the court procedures for determining competency to stand trial and for civil commitment are separate processes. In many cases, these separate processes create a gap in accessing services when a defendant is found incompetent to stand trial but not civilly committed, and therefore, not necessarily referred to services to address their ongoing mental health needs. This limits the response provided by the state and counties, which is not cost effective and fails to consider public safety.  
  
 Another barrier occurs when jailed defendants who have a mental illness and are civilly committed are not transferred to a state facility within 48 hours. A critical shortage of treatment beds at state treatment facilities frequently delays these transfers.  
  
 Reforming the civil commitment and competency processes and providing additional community-based services are essential components for improving the state's mental health system.  
**LEAD:** Minnesota County Attorneys Association.
- Support Efforts and Funding to Address Opioid and Other Drug Abuse.**  
 Counties are often the first to respond to alcohol and other drug abuse incidence in their jurisdictions, whether through corrections, child protection or health care. The steep increase in the use of opioids in the U.S. and in Minnesota in the last five years has significantly increased societal and economic costs, some of which counties are responsible for. To gain ground against this costly epidemic, a systemic public health approach that emphasizes prevention and early intervention needs to be funded and supported by government at all levels.  
**LEAD:** Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC).



## Safe Communities

Support local law enforcement, justice initiatives and corrections services that foster safe communities by investing in preventative, early intervention efforts and community-based correctional services.

### Community Corrections

- UPDATED: Fund the Ramsey County Supervised Release Revocation Prevention Pilot Project.**  
 Ramsey County has the second highest rate of probation revocation among Minnesota's 87 counties. Probation requires offenders to adhere to supervised release conditions. Violation of those conditions, both serious and technical, often result in offenders being returned to prison. Re-incarcerations herald poor short and long-term outcomes for offenders. Additionally, costs for incarceration are significantly higher than for supervised release. Ramsey County seeks state support and funding for a Center for Intermediate Sanctions that would send probationers to the workhouse for short stays, for minor or intermediate violations. Funding could come from the savings the state would realize from avoiding prison reincarceration. Keeping more of these offenders out of prison would also decrease the pressure on the state to build new prison beds.  
**LEAD:** Ramsey County.

- **NEW: Update Ramsey County Community Corrections Statutory Governing Language.** Currently, Ramsey County's state governing statute, 383A, contains language regarding the operations and oversight of the county's Community Corrections Department. More specifically, 383A.404, gives joint oversight of Ramsey County's corrections department to the county and the district court. Another statute, (Minn. Stat 401.02), which was enacted after the full state takeover the courts, designated all community corrections counties – including Ramsey County - as the sole authority for their corrections departments, giving them responsibility for funding, structure, administration, operation, management, and supervision. Last year, the county and the district court established the County-Court Joint Committee to explore better ways to work together. To resolve the ambiguities of current statutes, 383A.404 should be repealed. Further, the county and the court plan to continue the County-Court Joint Committee to facilitate ongoing collaboration and coordination.  
**LEAD: Ramsey County.**
- **NEW: Clarify the Re-Establishment of Voting Rights Following Completion of Prison Time Served for Felonies.** Current state law allows felons to vote only after all their sentence is completed, including any supervised release or probation. Many states restore voting rights to people convicted of felonies after they are released from prison. Minnesota does not restore these rights until any court ordered supervised release or probation is completed. Additionally, Minnesota's probationary periods are typically much longer than in other states, which means lengthy delays before people can vote again. All residents should be encouraged to be civically engaged. Those who have served their time and are now living, working and paying taxes in their home communities should be able to vote to elect their government representatives.  
**LEAD: Minnesota Second Chance Coalition and Restore the Vote Coalition.**
- **NEW: Support the Uniform Collateral Consequences of Conviction Act.** When individuals have been found guilty of certain crimes, under certain state and federal laws they become permanently or temporarily ineligible for some licenses, employment, housing and educational support and other public benefits. An example is a lifetime ban from working in a nursing home for a person who has been convicted of financial fraud against a vulnerable adult. Exclusion from certain benefits are referred to as collateral sanctions. These sanctions constitute penalties and disadvantage those upon whom they are imposed. While the goal of these sanctions is to protect the public, oftentimes the sanctions outweigh and outlast the impact of a crime, which may impede the ability of those who have offended to become self-sufficient, productive members of their community. The Uniform Collateral Consequences of Conviction Act is aimed at reforming the imposition of restrictions by: 1) educating the public about collateral consequences for specific acts, 2) notifying individuals when they are criminally charged, and again when they are sentenced and released, regarding the sanctions that apply to them, and 3) establishing a means for individuals convicted of a crime to apply for the restoration of their rights.  
**LEAD: Ramsey County** - Ramsey County Attorney's Office.
- **NEW: Direct Prison Savings Resulting from the 2016 Drug Sentencing Reform Act to Counties for Local Justice Reinvestment.** In 2016, the Minnesota Legislature reformed state sentencing guidelines for drug offenses. Sentencing for first time and minor drug offenses were significantly reduced. As a result, the number of people convicted of first time and minor drug crimes were not sentenced to prison time, and the state realized considerable savings. At the same time, these convictions increased community supervised release. The state savings from these reforms should be targeted to community corrections to engage in local justice initiatives.  
**LEAD: Minnesota County Attorneys Association.**

- **JDAI – Support Ongoing State Funding to Replace Expiring Private Foundation Grant Funds (Annie E. Casey).**

The Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI) was designed to support the Annie E. Casey Foundation’s vision that all youth involved in the juvenile justice system have opportunities to develop into healthy, productive adults. After more than 20 years of innovation and replication, JDAI is one of the nation’s most effective, influential and widespread juvenile justice system reform initiatives. In Ramsey County, since adopting JDAI, admissions to detention have been reduced 75 percent. Funding from the Casey Foundation ceased several years ago for the county. Ongoing funding from the state would provide stable support to continue this proven approach to working with juveniles. JDAI focuses on the juvenile detention component of the juvenile justice system because youth are often unnecessarily or inappropriately detained at great expense, with long-lasting negative consequences for both public safety and youth development.

**LEAD:** Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative, Minnesota (JDAI).

### **Criminal Law Reforms**

- **NEW: Support Changes to the Definition of Inebriation in State Consent Laws.**

A statutory change is needed so that prosecutors can address sexual assault involving the mental incapacity that comes from alcohol or drug intoxication. Current law requires them to prove a physical state of actual or near unconsciousness, which can be challenging when the victim has limited or no recall of events. Reconsideration of the statutory definition of inebriation should be updated to reflect the expanded understanding of incapacitating factors and the impact involving sexual assault.

**LEAD:** Ramsey County and Hennepin County Attorneys.

- **Coordinate the Statute of Limitation for Failure to Report Child Sexual Abuse with the Statute of Limitation for Child Sexual Abuse.**

State law currently defines who is mandated to report suspected child maltreatment or abuse to law enforcement or human services authorities. Under current statute, a mandated reporter can be charged with failure to report for up to three years after the sexual abuse offense occurred. However, the statute of limitation for the sexual abuse of a child is much longer – nine years or within three years of the report to law enforcement – in recognition of the fact that children often do not tell anyone about the abuse until later. Lengthening the statute of limitation for failure to report by a mandated reporter should match that of the sexual abuse statute of limitations.

**LEAD:** Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault (MNCASA).



## **Achievement and Employment**

Support educational, training and job-related services that provide opportunities for residents to develop the skills necessary to build viable careers with wages that support self-sufficiency.

- **Support Regional Workforce Efforts.**

Workforce efforts at the local, regional and state levels need to be aligned to ensure maximum benefits for individuals and businesses. To successfully compete in the global marketplace, businesses need access to a diverse, skilled workforce. Addressing the economic, racial and gender disparities, particularly for African Americans and American Indians, requires that career pathways be opened and that barriers be mitigated. Attention to training and education, must be coupled with equity efforts in housing, transportation, child care and other stabilizing factors. Harnessing the state’s active employer leadership and the state and local workforce efforts requires the investment of adequate, ongoing and predictable state funding.

**LEAD:** Minnesota Workforce Council Association (MWCA).

- SNAP Employment and Training Programs: Support Local Flexibility.**  
 Currently, Minnesota mandates that able-bodied adults enrolled in the federal- and state-funded Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) must participate in the SNAP Education and Training (SNAP E&T) program. The state has the option of making this requirement voluntary, which would allow local programs to strategically match these vital support services to specific participants. The Minnesota Department of Human Services will ask the state legislature for approval to include this change in the state's SNAP E&T Plan, which must be submitted to the U.S. Department of Agriculture annually.  
**LEAD:** Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS).



## Transportation and Transit

Support investment in building and maintaining a transportation and transit system that provides stable, efficient access to all communities, especially where a current lack of transit limits options for employment, housing, educational and recreational opportunities.

### Regional Rail

- UP Railroad/BNSF Railway Grade Separation Project.**  
 State funds of \$1 million are requested for predesign and design activities for the Union Pacific/BNSF Railway grade separation project. This work includes environmental design and engineering required for the completion of a grade separation of UP and BNSF track adjacent to Westminster Junction to the east of downtown Saint Paul. This has been identified as a critical junction to move all rail lines through this area and help address rail line congestion.  
**LEAD:** Ramsey County.

### Leased Vehicle Sales Tax

- Include Hennepin and Ramsey Counties as Recipients of Revenue Derived from the Leased Vehicle Sales Tax.**  
 Currently, metro-area counties receive funding for transportation projects through the leased vehicle tax, except Ramsey and Hennepin, even though most of the funds are collected in these two counties. State statute should be amended to include all metro counties.  
**LEAD:** Ramsey County and Hennepin County.

### Local Bridges and Roads

- Support MnDOT Local Bridge Replacement Program.**  
 The Local Bridge Replacement (LBRP) and Local Road Improvement Programs (LRIP) administered by the State Aid Division of the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) provide important funding support to counties, cities and townships. This includes funding for the replacement, rehabilitation or removal of deficient bridges on the local road systems and for the construction or reconstruction of local roads. Ramsey County supports MnDOT's efforts to secure state bridge bonds to fund these transportation programs.  
**LEAD:** Minnesota Department of Transportation.



## General Government

Support general government policies and practices that contribute to efficient, effective and transparent services that are equally accessible to residents and businesses across all regions of the state.

- **NEW: Support the Census Work of the Minnesota Demographic Center.**  
 The Minnesota Demographic Center leads the statewide effort to promote the US census, the next full census due in 2020. Extensive preparation and coordination with federal, state and local government partners requires adequate funding from the federal and state governments. The state of Minnesota is at risk of losing one of its eight congressional seats and an electoral college vote, so an accurate count of all residents is particularly important at this time. The population count also impacts the funding the state receives for many federally funded programs, such as highway aid, Medicaid, SNAP and Section 8 Housing. Currently, the state receives an estimated \$1,500 per person each year for these types of programs. Further, because of the federal agency in charge of the census plans to include a question designed to suppress participation by immigrants and refugees, many may not be counted. Ramsey County has the highest number of immigrants per capita amongst the Minnesota's counties, and the board believes that adequate funding is essential for producing an accurate census.  
**LEAD:** Minnesota Demographic Center.
- **NEW: Streamline Water Permitting Process for Local Infrastructure Projects.**  
 In collaboration with local government, a state assumption of the Section 404 federal permitting program related to local infrastructure projects would increase efficiencies and decrease project start-to-finish timelines. In 2015, the state legislature passed an initiative supporting the Association of Minnesota Counties to study the feasibility of a state assumption of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineer Section 404 waters and wetlands dredge/fill regulatory program. Subsequently, the study findings did not support a state assumption of duties. More recently, the Corps of Engineers has changed their assessment and now supports a state assumption of the program. Counties support moving enabling legislation forward this session, in their ongoing efforts to streamline the permitting process for local infrastructure projects, both public and private.  
**LEAD:** Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC).
- **NEW: Support Statewide Coordination of Recycled Material Market Development.**  
 Commodity markets for materials otherwise found in waste are best developed through statewide coordinated efforts. Counties play a central role in the collection and redirection of recyclables to industrial sectors using these materials. Domestic and international markets for recycled materials have been volatile, making it difficult for counties to reliably move what they collect to manufacturers. Without a well-developed reusable marketplace, the environmental goals that drive recycling efforts lose their purpose. Counties, along with other partners, support a public/private partnership that enhances the regular use of recyclables by local markets, which creates jobs and protects Minnesota's environment.  
**LEAD:** Partnership on Waste and Energy.
- **Revise Eminent Domain Process.**  
 Require that owners submit their basic property valuation 45 days (currently five days) before an eminent domain-related commission hearing date, giving counties time to amend their initial offers. Additionally, to contain public costs, tie the interest rate for awards to the U.S. Treasury Bill secondary market and establish parameters for attorney's fees.  
**LEAD:** Minnesota County Engineers Association.

- **Balance Data Practices Laws to Foster Government Efficiency and Transparency.**  
The efficient, transparent operation of government is enhanced by well-balanced data practices and privacy laws. Defined public data access, coupled with prudent protection of information that is personal and defined as private or non-public, allows residents to keep informed of government actions. Technological advances and changes in business practices that rely less on paper and more on electronic formats (such as email) call for a review of current data practices laws.

Additionally, local governments are currently responsible for setting data retention schedules and reporting them to the state. State-mandated retention schedules with fixed retention periods would diminish flexibility for local governments, which provides better service to residents, tracks with local technical capabilities and fits local budgets. Updates to data practices laws should consider the costs to state and local governments and how these laws improve access; they should also address intentionally disruptive, expensive requests that provide little or no benefit to the public.  
**LEAD:** Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC).



## Parks and Libraries

### Parks and Recreation

- **NEW: Support Metropolitan Operation and Maintenance Request for the Metropolitan Regional Park System.**  
In the first year of the state biennium, the state legislature determines the allocation to supplement the operations and maintenance of Metropolitan Area Regional Parks Agencies. Appropriations are distributed to the 10 implementing agencies (IAs) based on a statutory formula. The amounts may vary year-to-year based on the amount of Lottery in Lieu funding that is available. The Metro Regional Parks implementing agencies include Ramsey County. In 2018 Ramsey County received approximately \$687,000.  
**LEAD:** Metropolitan Council and the Metropolitan Area Regional Parks Agencies.
- **NEW: Support Allocation of Legacy Funds for Parks and Trail Projects.**  
Legacy Funds are distributed to various parks systems as follows: 40 percent to Metropolitan Area Regional Parks, 40 percent to State Parks (Dept. of Natural Resources) and 20 percent to Greater Minnesota Regional Parks. Ramsey County supports the continuation of this formula. Ramsey County receives from these funds each year approximately \$1.5 million, which are used for projects recommended by Ramsey County Parks and Recreation.  
**LEAD:** Metropolitan Area Regional Parks Agencies.
- **NEW: Support the Allocation of Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council Funds for the Ramsey County Pigs Eye Lake Project.**  
Ramsey is seeking funding from the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council Fund of \$4.337 million, which will be used by Ramsey County for an Island Habitat Restoration and Enhancement Project at Pigs Eye Lake. This state funding will be used as a match for the \$11.233 million in federal funding that Ramsey County is seeking through the Army Corps of Engineers.  
**LEAD:** Ramsey County.

### Libraries

- **Fund Regional Library Basic System Support (RLBSS) - \$13,570,000 annually statewide.**  
Funding for this program has been flat since State FY 2009. Distributed through the Metropolitan Library Service Agency (MELSA), RLBSS funds provide direct support for Ramsey County Library services, programs, staff training, and technology infrastructure. Collective purchases made by MELSA with RLBSS funding enhance free access to online digital resources and database services for Ramsey County residents.  
**LEAD:** Metropolitan Library Service Agency (MELSA).

- **Fund Regional Library Telecommunications Aid (RLTA) - \$2,300,000 annually statewide.**  
 In conjunction with the federal E-Rate program, RLTA covers the full telecommunications cost for Minnesota's public libraries and can be used to maintain libraries' network infrastructure. Given the heavy reliance on online catalogs and collections and public internet/wireless demand, this support is critical.  
**LEAD:** Metropolitan Library Service Agency (MELSA).
- **Fund Arts & Cultural Heritage (ACHF)/Legacy Programs.**  
 In the current biennium, \$2.5 million annually supported arts programs in public libraries throughout the state. By formula, more than \$635,000 was made available to Twin Cities area libraries through this program. ACHF/Legacy programs for public libraries must receive a new funding authorization in the 2019 Legislative Session to continue into the next biennium.  
**LEAD:** Metropolitan Library Service Agency (MELSA).



## Capital Improvement Requests

### Ramsey County Requests

- **Battle Creek Winter Recreation Construction, \$2.126 Million.**  
 (equal local match from Ramsey County and winter trail users)  
 A permanent snow-making system for cross-country skiing, downhill skiing and sledding would be installed at the Battle Creek Recreation Area in Saint Paul. Local teams would use the facility for training, which would also draw in regional competitions.
- **Riverview Modern Streetcar Project, \$2 Million.**  
 (equal local match from project budget)  
 Pre-design and design work, including preliminary engineering and environmental analysis for the streetcar line, which will run 12 miles from Union Depot the Minneapolis/St. Paul International Airport and the Mall of America.
- **Rush Line Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Project, \$2 Million.**  
 (equal local match from project budget)  
 State bonding is sought for the pre-design and design activities for the Rush Line BRT Project. The pre-design and design work includes preliminary engineering and environmental analysis for the locally preferred alternative stretching 14 miles from White Bear Lake to Union Depot.

### Capital Investment Support Items

- **Kellogg -Third Street Bridge Replacement, \$48 million.**  
 Deemed structurally deficient and functionally obsolete, the bridge is needed to return this critical artery to full capacity. It is an essential access point for the East Side community and for the expansion of the regional transportation network for the larger East metro area of the region.  
**LEAD:** City of Saint Paul.
- **Twin Cities to Milwaukee/Chicago Second Daily Train, \$4 Million.**  
 The Twin Cities Milwaukee Chicago (TCMC) Passenger Rail Study will complete analysis for introducing a second daily train between the Twin Cities, Milwaukee and Chicago at speeds up to 80 mph. Phase One of this study is currently underway, however, funding is needed for Phase Two, which includes completion of environmental documentation and a service development plan. Passenger trains would utilize the existing Amtrak corridor from Union Depot in Saint Paul to Chicago. Minnesota station stops would be Union Depot , Red Wing and Winona.  
**LEAD:** Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT).

## Ramsey County Platform Support of Other Positions

In addition to the initiatives contained in this platform, the Ramsey County Board of Commissioners generally supports the legislative recommendations of the local units of government within the county and organizations in which it holds membership, including, but not limited to:

- Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC) and its associated professional organizations, including:
  - Local Public Health Association of MN (LPHA).
  - Minnesota Association of County Social Services Administrators (MACSSA).
  - Minnesota Association of County Officers (MACO).
  - Minnesota Community Corrections Act Counties (MCCAC).
- Minnesota County Engineer Association (MCEA).
- Ramsey/Washington Recycling and Energy Board.
- Partnership on Waste and Energy.
- Minnesota Association of Watershed Districts (MWAD).
- Association of Minnesota Emergency Managers (AMEM).
- Minnesota Workforce Council Association (MWCA).
- Minnesota Inter-County Association (MICA).
- Metropolitan Library Services Association (MLSA).

The County Board may choose to take a different position on individual items within the platforms of these and other organization's whose platforms they generally support.

The county board may also consider additional positions in response to issues that emerge during the legislative session.

## Ramsey County Board of Commissioners

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