

**2019**



**LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES**

# SHERBURNE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

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*Sherburne County supports all of the Legislative Priorities developed and adopted by the Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC) and Minnesota Inter County Association (MICA). However, the priorities outlined in this brochure are of particular interest to Sherburne County.*

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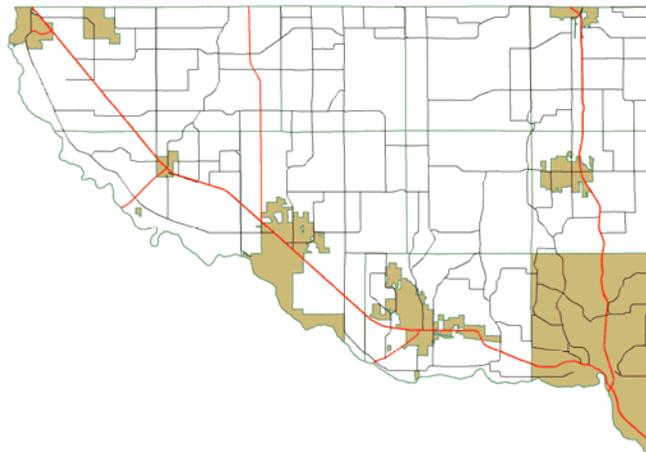
# PUBLIC WORKS ISSUES

## Transportation Revenue

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### Background

Minnesota's transportation system is a critical element of the state's economic vitality. Building and maintaining a safe, efficient and effective transportation system is one of the most basic and vital services provided by all levels of government. Financial resources available to expand the capacity of the state's transportation system continue to lack funding.



## **PUBLIC WORKS ISSUES** *(Cont.)*

There are five major transportation priorities in Sherburne County that require an increase in transportation funding. Most involve the state Trunk Highway system which is clearly underdeveloped in Sherburne County.

### **A. Engineering & Environmental Funding for TH 169 and CSAH 4**

With the removal of all stoplights south of Zimmerman in the near future, this intersection will see tremendous traffic pressure. Being the only remaining signal on this 75-mile stretch of TH 169 between I-94 and Mille Lacs, it will result in major congestion and safety issues. Currently it's ranked the 2<sup>nd</sup> worst in safety for high speed, high volume roads within Central Minnesota (District 3). This is a major freight and recreational corridor that also serves a vital function locally in the success of Sherburne County.

### **B. Provide Resources to Support Growth around Sherco in Becker**

As the energy industry redefines itself in and around the Sherco Power Plant in Becker, it is evident that the transportation system needs to be able to support the economic growth that will occur in this nearly 2,000-acre area. Improved road strength, safe freight routes and convenient connections to the trunk highway system are a must.

## **PUBLIC WORKS ISSUES** *(Cont.)*

### **C. Improve Connectivity Between TH 10 and I-94**

Regional and local connectivity between Interstate 94 and Trunk Highway 10 has become a vital local and regional transportation priority, supporting the economic and social well-being of the region. However, transportation pressure has grown sharply recently and anticipated commercial and industrial growth will continue to cause additional strain on the already congested area. As an example, TH 25 already carries up to 35,000 vehicles per day and TH 24 carries more than 16,000 vehicles. They are heavily used routes for freight vehicles and heavily used by recreational traffic during the warm weather cabin months. Population and employment totals continue to significantly increase. It is anticipated that by 2040 the area is expected to add 75,000 people.

### **D. Increase Funding for Freight Movement and Expand Rail Grant Program**

As Sherburne County continues to develop both on a commercial and industrial level, the pressure placed on the County Highway system will be exponential. Much of our system provides a first/last mile connection to the state highways. Our vast tracts of property are generating high interest in development. These tracts are near many attractive resources while maintaining close proximity to the Twin Cities Metro area. Freight traffic is also utilizing TH 10 and TH 169 as they navigate their way to northern MN and across the Mississippi River. 2017 was the first year of the MN Freight Program as created in the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act. 2018 was the first year of the Minnesota Rail Service Improvement Grant Program and \$1 million was allocated to the program.

## **PUBLIC WORKS ISSUES (Cont.)**

### **E. Increase Funding for Rural Highway Safety**

The bulk of the vehicular fatalities within Minnesota occur on rural, 2-lane, high-speed roads that do not have interstate-type safety features. In 2015, 262 fatal crashes (70%) occurred in rural areas, with 125 fatal crashes occurring on county state aid highways. Sherburne County experiences even higher levels given our rural nature yet metropolitan-type traffic volumes. In 2015 we ranked 9<sup>th</sup> highest, out of 87 counties, in number of people killed at 11.

### **Requested Positions**

Sherburne County urges the legislature to pass a comprehensive transportation funding bill that includes the following provisions:

1. Provide funding for the engineering and environmental project development specifically for an interchange at TH 169 and CSAH 4 in Zimmerman.
2. Provide trunk highway bonding for the Corridors of Commerce program to fund projects like TH 10 through Elk River and the improved connectivity between I-94 and TH 10 near Big Lake and Becker.
3. Increase funding level for the MN Highway Freight Program to assist with building a comprehensive freight system.
4. Increase funding level for the MN Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) to reduce fatalities and continue our trend Toward Zero Deaths on Minnesota Roadways.
5. Increase funding allocated to the Minnesota Rail Service Improvement Grant Program (MRSI) currently administered through MNDOT.

# INFRASTRUCTURE

## Rural Area Broadband Fiber Access

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### Background

Sherburne County continues to receive feedback from local residents about their lack of broadband connectivity. Increasing the opportunities to access funding for broadband development will accelerate economic growth throughout the region.

### Requested Positions

1. Sherburne County recommends increasing the funding level for rural fiber broadband programs including public agencies that choose to develop the physical infrastructure with the interest of a public-private partnership.
2. Sherburne County supports the goal of all local businesses and homes having access to high speed broadband that provides minimum download speeds of at least twenty-five megabits per second and minimum upload speeds of at least three megabits per second.
3. Sherburne County recommends legislation that fosters private/public partnerships and reduces barriers that have made collaborations burdensome and/or impossible.

# Health & Human Services Issues

## 24-Hour Child Protection Response

**MaryJo Cobb**, *Health & Human Services Director*

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### **Background**

MN Statutes require that reports involving child sexual abuse allegations must receive a Family Investigation. Another subdivision states that the child protection agency must have a face to face contact with the alleged victim and their primary caregiver to assess the child's safety within 24 hours, whether the child is clearly safe at the moment or not. The current law does not allow for any exceptions.

A related concern is that no credit is given to agencies who make reasonable efforts to see the alleged victim within 24 hours but the victim cannot be located.

Failure to meet a 90% threshold for face to face contact will result in a loss of \$35,000 per year.

### **Requested Positions**

1. Amend legislation to allow supervisory override to the 24-hour face to face response requirement in special situations where a child is safe.
2. Add language which gives agencies credit where, despite diligent efforts, the children cannot be found.

# COUNTY ATTORNEY ISSUES

## Criminal and Civil Court Gaps

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### Background

Presently there is a legal gap between the criminal court and the civil court when addressing people who are found incompetent in the criminal case. There are two different standards for determination in the criminal and civil arenas. People who are found incompetent in the criminal case may not meet the criteria for civil commitment. If the individual is not willing to undertake voluntary services, they may go untreated. These are called the “gap” cases. For those who do meet the criteria for civil commitment, access to programming becomes an issue.

### Requested Positions

1. A revision of the statutory framework to address the “gap” cases;
2. The statutory scheme must provide to two different groups of individuals: those who can safely be treated in the community and those who need a more secure environment;
3. A statutory scheme that allows the intervention with individuals who come into the system regardless of the type of crime they are charged with so they can be directed into treatment;
4. Provision of resources to develop the restoration to competency programs regionally so individuals can be closer to their community support systems.

# ADMINISTRATION

## Economic Development

### Becker Industrial Park Improvement

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#### Background

The retirement of Sherco Unit 2 (2023) and Unit 1 (2026) are imminent and will cause a loss in tax base, employment, and area investment. As the state and country move away from coal and towards renewable and natural gas as the economic backbone, Sherco 3's retirement is also inevitable. Comprising 75% of the Becker's tax base, this represents an exceptional loss to a small area in rural Minnesota. Xcel's planned new gas plant will help fill the gap, but to offset the retirement of the Sherco coal units, the area must expand and diversify its commercial and industrial base. Given the Sherco site's unparalleled access to critical utilities and infrastructure, the city, county, and Xcel Energy have long been discussing the need to use the site as a new state-of-the-art business park as a catalyst for new investment in the region.

As part of this on-going initiative, the county, city, and Xcel Energy have been in discussions with a Fortune 100, multinational technology company for a new light industrial facility for the site. Our intent is for the project to provide an initial anchor that will help attract even more capital investment, professional wage, new-economy jobs, and long-term economic vitality. This particular facility will be powered with 100% renewable energy through a forward-looking transaction with Xcel Energy. And DEED modeling of this project alone estimates that it could provide significant direct and spill-over benefits, including:

- \$500 million+ in capital investment
- 1,600+ local construction jobs and 50+ high-skilled, professional wage, permanent jobs

To accommodate this project and attract similar future investment, the city needs to provide the required infrastructure investments for the business park, feasibility studies estimate the following:

- Municipal water and sanitary sewer: \$9,500,000
- Municipal sewer: \$7,100,000
- Storm water and drainage \$2,000,000
- Roads and lighting \$1,500,000
- **Total:** **\$20,100,000**

### **Requested Position**

Sherburne County urges the legislature to support:

1. Further infrastructure buildout of the Sherco Business Park site.
2. The transition from a predominantly coal-based energy economy to one based on natural gas and renewables.
3. \$20M in funding to enhance the public/private partnership opportunities and pay for the necessary infrastructure build-out costs for the Sherco Business Park so as to attract long-term private capital and investment.

## Notes

## Notes

The Sherburne County Board has provided long-term guidance and direction to staff to help communicate and align resources effectively – accordingly the following five goals have been established:

1. Promote Healthy, Safe and Livable *Communities*
2. Encourage *Economic* Vitality
3. Enhance and Expand *Partnerships* While Creating an Informed Public
4. *Fiscally* Prudent and Stewards of the Public Trust
5. Foster *Organizational* Excellence



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