

Washington State Association of County Engineers Legislative Priorities 2021-2023

Counties simply do not have the revenues needed to keep pace with the demands placed upon our transportation system.

- **The county share of state gas allocations has declined precipitously over the past two decades.** Increases to the state gas tax have been almost wholly dedicated toward specific state projects, with very little investment to counties.
- **Since 1999 the state gas tax has more than doubled,** going from 23 cents to 49 cents, but direct fuel tax distributions to Counties have not kept pace – increasing only 1/2 cent in that same period.

Counties now receive close to \$500 million less a biennium, when adjusted for inflation, than we did 30 years ago. Our revenue challenges are unsustainable and risk the health and safety of our communities and environment. We simply cannot continue to do more with less. **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.

Targeted Increases to Rural Arterial Program (RAP) and County Arterial Preservation Program (CAPP)

The RAP and CAPP programs provide valuable revenues to county road programs through efficient and transparent means.

Increase County Share of Gas Tax

Since 1999 the state gas tax has more than doubled, going from 23 cents to 49 cents. County direct fuel tax distributions have increased a dismally low 1/2 cent or 1.9%.

Federal Fund Exchange Program

The Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) funds critical preservation and maintenance activities counties desperately need. However, federal funds often come with added red-tape, resulting in heftier price-tags and longer timelines.

A federal fund exchange or “swap” is quite simple. Counties would be allowed to swap their sub-allocation of federal-aid highway funds for state transportation funds. Such an exchange allows counties to undertake local projects subject to applicable state and local, rather than federal, requirements. A swap such as this allows Counties to save resources and time on their STBG, allowing for the more efficient use of federal and state funds.

Counties are seeking \$100 million for the County Arterial Preservation Program (CAPP), and \$140 million for the Rural Arterial Program (RAP)

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