

2015 Legislative Initiatives

Local Transportation Funding Restoration – With the recent expansion of transportation revenues, it is time for local governments to again play a more significant role in the State’s transportation funding plan. Many new State projects, including transit, have been added into the Consolidated Transportation Plan, while local governments have continued to struggle to maintain and preserve their roadways. MACo believes all avenues should be explored to restore local funding - the use of federal resources, the reallocation of funds should projects be delayed, and the reallocation of State highway user revenues back to local governments over time. MACo urges State policymakers to take the necessary steps to restore HUR and local roadway infrastructure.

Cooperation and Investment in Education – Counties have concerns that strict school funding laws may deter county investment of additional funding above required minimums and stem cooperation between county governments and school boards. Reducing funding disincentives may encourage county support for innovative pilot programs, and more fairly recognize short-term needs or investments as outside perpetual mandates. A smarter system for budget submissions to the State could mesh with county and school board budget processes, giving them a meaningful opportunity to consider reducing overall costs through joint administration of programs and other collaborations.

Broad Tools to Tackle the Drug Crisis – Drug-related deaths and crises continue to rise in epidemic proportions. Counties in all regions need support and coordination among state and local agencies, with appropriate local flexibility, to bridge remaining gaps. A customized approach is necessary as the diverse agents will require different forms of assistance. First responders will benefit from additional training and equipment. Public health providers will benefit from support to retain and expand treatment and preventative services. Citizens will benefit from increased access to life-saving medications and innovative policies to protect their individual and collective well-being. MACo advocates for comprehensive legislation and budget initiatives to address the growing drug problem confronting each county and the unique needs of their communities by providing broader and better tools.

Efficient and Effective Pretrial Functions – Counties urge the State to adopt effective measures to improve pretrial services in District Courts. A one-time \$10 million earmark to provide court-mandated counsel offers nothing more than a temporary effort. District Courts are seeing process backups, local jails face housing challenges, and counties anxiously await the unknown mid-year cost burden. An effective and efficient pretrial system requires investment in properly trained staff, improved communication technology, better tools for risk assessment, and assurances that the State will back up this new commitment. Counties urge the State to deliver a plan to resolve this vexing issue without overloading local jails with longer term pretrial holdings, or unfunded mandates to support programs or employees totally outside their control.