



CARVER
COUNTY

LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

2026

“

*Where the future embraces the past in keeping Carver County
a great place to live, work, and play for a lifetime.*



LOCAL POLICY CONTROL

The Carver County Board of Commissioners supports local decision-making authority and opposes legislation that removes the ability for local elected officials to respond to the needs of its businesses and constituents or that restricts local decision-making authority.

Locally elected decision-makers hold the best position to determine what health, safety, and welfare regulations best serve their constituents. Like state and federal legislative leaders, local elected officials are held accountable through Minnesota's robust elections process. Ordinances at the local level are enacted only after a comprehensive, legal, and open process.

The public's access to local officials is much easier, as is attending local county board and city council meetings.

Counties are often laboratories for determining public policy approaches to the challenges that face residents and businesses. Preserving local control in our state has yielded widespread benefits such as the 2007 Freedom to Breathe Act, and an amendment to the Minnesota Clean Indoor Air Act.



2026 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

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UNFUNDED STATE & FEDERAL MANDATES

BACKGROUND

Carver County opposes state or federal mandates and costs without full and stable funding. These unfunded mandates unfairly shift financial responsibility to counties. Recent state and federal legislative decisions have created unprecedented costs to Minnesota County governments. As a result, Carver County is proposing a 2 percent property tax levy surcharge each year for the next three budget cycles to cover an estimated \$6 million in cost shifts. Carver County requests that our legislators work in partnership with Counties toward sustainable solutions. Examples of unfunded mandates/funding shifts include, but are not limited to:

- **\$3.5 million** = Minnesota African American Family Preservation & Child Welfare Disproportionality Act.
- **\$1 million** = Federal SNAP cost shifts and Medicaid staff increased workload.
- **\$910,000** = “Does Not Meet Criteria” cost shift.
- **\$700,000** = MnCHOICES Flat Fee cost shift.
- **\$600,000** = Medical & Mental Health Costs for Jail Inmates.
- **\$400,000** = Paid Family Medical Leave.
- **\$380,000** = Unfunded children’s mental health services (non-Medicaid).
- **\$250,000** = Consumer First Services and Supports (CFSS) Disability Program.
- **\$200,000** = Various public safety mandates, including emergency management planning and training, 911 dispatch training and equipment requirements, and detention-related costs.
- **\$75,000** = After-hours coverage as the state “Safety Net” for adult and child protection.
- **\$16,000** = Publication of financial statements, County Board meeting minutes, and budget hearing notices.

REQUESTED POSITION

State or federal legislation not accompanied with commensurate funding be revised or removed. Further, the state legislature should pass legislation to sunset all county-level mandates, reviewing each legislative item to determine if it should continue or be eliminated. Finally, all legislation impacting local government needs to include a “local impact note” to determine if it increases local government costs.

ENHANCE LOCAL DEPUTY REGISTRARS LONG-TERM FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

BACKGROUND

Communities benefit when Deputy Registrar services are locally accessible, and customers are provided with a high level of service and efficiency. The decentralized partnership between the State and local Deputy Registrars relies on legislative action to regularly adjust Deputy Registrar filing fees to ensure long-term sustainability of local Deputy Registrar operations. Similar to other Counties, Carver County taxpayers' subsidization for the County's two license centers has increased the past several budget cycles primarily due to the following factors that are outside of our control:

1. Annual wage and benefit increases needed to retain and attract staff in a competitive labor market.
2. Longer average amount of time to complete each transaction due to:
 - a. More required up-front interaction with customers to ensure the necessary information and documentation is comprehensive and accurate, i.e. MNDRIVE, Real ID, Driver License for All, etc.
 - b. Minnesota Department of Public Safety Driver and Vehicle Services (DPS-DVS) "**online services expansion**" which has transitioned simple transactions, such as standard license plate renewals, to online transactions, which means our staff are processing a higher percentage of more complex and time-consuming transactions.
3. Increasing percentage of "**no-fee customer interactions**" from more phone calls and in-person conversations that result in neither a transaction nor a filing fee due to a variety of factors including DPS-DVS "**online services expansion.**"

Minimizing local taxpayer subsidization for local Deputy Registrars was studied in these two reports:

1. Independent Expert Review of Driver & Vehicle Services ("2022 King Report").
2. Financial Sustainability Assessment Report ("2024 BerryDunn Report").

ENHANCE LOCAL DEPUTY REGISTRARS LONG-TERM FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

REQUESTED POSITION

- 1. Online Fee Sharing:** Prohibit DPS-DVS from further “online services expansion” until the legislature implements the key recommendation on page 21 of the 2022 King Report to “allocate 25 - 50 percent of the filing fees for mail-in and online transactions” to local Deputy Registrars.
- 2. \$1.00 “Local Office” Fee for License Plate Renewals:** Eliminate the current \$1.00 penalty for customers who process tab renewals in-person at a “Local Office” by approving the suggestion on page 37 of the 2024 BerryDunn Report to, effective 8/1/26, add a \$1.00 convenience fee for mail-in and online tab renewals with the “associated revenues routed and disseminated back to” the local Deputy Registrars.
- 3. Enhance Long-Term Financial Sustainability:** Direct DPS-DVS to make recommendations to “increase filing fees and/or the amount of current fees that are retained” for consideration by the 2027 legislature to be effective 8/1/27 based on the long-term recommendations summarized on page 7 of the 2024 BerryDunn Report.

CHILD PROTECTION: MINNESOTA AFRICAN AMERICAN FAMILY PRESERVATION AND CHILD WELFARE DISPROPORTIONALLY ACT (MAAFPCWDA)

BACKGROUND

The Minnesota African American Family Preservation and Child Welfare Disproportionality Act (MAAFPCWDA) was signed into law by the 2024 Legislature (Chapter 117/Minnesota Statutes §260.61 to §260.693) with an effective statewide implementation date of January 1, 2027.

2024 legislation provided funding to Hennepin and Ramsey Counties to begin implementation, but no funding has been allocated to the remaining Minnesota counties.

The primary goal of MAAFPCWDA is to reduce disparities in child protection services, with an emphasis on using culturally relevant services. The application of the “Active Efforts” standard (versus “Reasonable Efforts”) will apply to approximately 80 percent of all Carver County child protection cases. Active efforts will require more from the county staff who work with families - more time and more resources.

“ACTIVE EFFORTS” WILL ADD TO THE COUNTY LEVY FOR:

- 1. Added County staff costs:** lower caseload sizes will be needed to accommodate staff time to correctly apply the “Active Efforts” standard. Many surrounding counties will all be hiring additional staff at the same time to implement this law, making hiring more competitive. With increases in staff more supervisory time is needed. Contracting will be needed to obtain culturally specific providers.
- 2. Added data requirements:** There are 21 quantitative, five qualitative, and two summary data elements required as part of the case review. SSIS (the state system) is currently incapable of producing this data. Carver County staff will have to hand tally this information; burdening staff with this additional administrative work and limiting their time spent assisting families and children.
- 3. Transportation:** Transportation costs will increase to facilitate family access to culturally specific services that are not available in Carver County. This will mean increased staff mileage or client gas card costs and added use of county fleet vehicles (gas, repairs, earlier replacement costs).
- 4. The legislature did not set spending or time limits regarding what Counties must pay as part of Active Efforts.** Things like residential clean-up, car repairs, long-term rent payments, purchasing cars for clients, and installing an egress window for a relative caretaker are examples given related to this new law. Lack of financial commitment to this work by the 2025 legislature means costs related to Active Efforts will fall to local taxpayers.

CHILD PROTECTION: MINNESOTA AFRICAN AMERICAN FAMILY PRESERVATION AND CHILD WELFARE DISPROPORTIONALLY ACT (MAAFPCWDA)

REQUESTED POSITION

- Delay and tier further implementation of the law. Establish a process to implement counties in cohorts. By the end of 2025, Hennepin and Ramsey will only have applied 50 percent of their cases to this new law. Data is needed to understand the local County impact and ready counties to implement this new law. Additionally, statewide implementation should be delayed until SSIS is updated and ready to capture the required case data.
- Allocate adequate funding to counties to implement this law (fund additional staff, hard expenditures related to Active Efforts, provider contracting, etc.). Carver County has evaluated the current cases that would fall under MAAFPCWDA, if it were effective today, and estimates total cost to the County of \$3.4 million per year to implement and meet statutory requirements.
- The state should own the case review process. Minnesota is a state-supervised, County-administered system. DCYF (Minnesota Department of Children, Youth, and Families) already has a case review infrastructure in place and should be responsible for doing these case reviews and not individual County agencies.
- Modify current language in Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 260 to hold social services agencies accountable to “Reasonable Efforts” versus “Active Efforts.”

MEDICAID DISABILITY WAIVERS MUST BE FUNDED BY FEDERAL & STATE

BACKGROUND

Minnesota Statutes 256B.0911, Subd. 10(g), “defines “Lead Agency” as a County administering or a Tribe or health plan under contract with the Commissioner to administer long-term care consultation services.”

Minnesota Statutes 256B.092, Subd, 3(b), “The commissioner must require lead agency supervisors to review and accept all service agreements entered by lead agency staff into the Medicaid Management Information System (MMIS) prior to the commissioner’s approval of the service agreement. For a service agreement with a proposed total authorized amount that exceeds the total authorized amount in the recipient’s prior service agreement by more than the value of legislatively enacted rate increases, the [MN DHS] Commissioner must manually review and manually approve the service agreement in MMIS.”

Minnesota Statutes 256B.4914, Subd. 14, states in part, “...the [Minnesota DHS] Commissioner shall use that information [from the counties] to evaluate and, if necessary, approve an alternative payment rate for those individuals...”

Minnesota Statutes 256B.4911, Subd. 8, state “Policies governing the consumer-directed community supports program must be created solely by the [MN DHS] Commissioner. Lead agencies must not create or implement any policies that are in addition to or are inconsistent with policies created by the Commissioner or federal or state laws. Any handbooks, procedures, or other guidance documents maintained by a lead agency do not have the force or effect of law...”

It is clear, by Minnesota Statutes, that the Medicaid Waiver system is state supervised, County administered, where the (Minnesota DHS) Commissioner has the authority to set policy and has final approval on services rendered. The County is merely the service provider under contract with the Commissioner to administer long-term care consultation (disability waiver) services and in some cases, when chosen by the recipient, to provide case management services.

During the 2025 legislature, it was proposed by the Governor (5 percent County share for residential services), House (rate exception-related services), and Senate (2 percent County share for residential services) that costs for Residential Services under the Disability Waivers (BI, CADI, CAC, and DD) and/or rate exceptions be cost-shifted to the counties. This is counterintuitive to how the entire system is structured.

MEDICAID DISABILITY WAIVERS MUST BE FUNDED BY FEDERAL & STATE

REQUESTED POSITION

The Medicaid Disability Waiver program must remain a state and federal program where costs are split between these two authoritative bodies. Costs must not be shifted to counties regardless of the establishment of a workgroup by the 2025 legislature. Counties should not share part of the cost as it is critical that counties who administer the services on behalf of the state remain objective and work with recipients on informed choice of services.

- Adding a cost share could create a disincentive to place individuals in residential settings that may need it, knowing that it would create budget tensions.
- Adding this cost to the local tax levy creates undue hardship to counties with limited budgets, like Carver County, and will take away funding from other services that benefit the community to satisfy a state mandate such as this.

SNAP AND MEDICAL COST SHIFTS: MITIGATE IMPACT TO COUNTIES

BACKGROUND

In June/July 2025, a federal Reconciliation Bill passed and was signed into law that contains significant changes aimed at reducing federal costs and shifting financial and administrative costs onto state and County governments. Minnesota is one of three states in the country where the non-federal share of Economic Assistance work is paid for by counties.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) new benefit cost share: prior to the 2025 Reconciliation Bill the federal government paid 100 percent of SNAP benefit costs. Effective October 1, 2027, states are responsible for a portion of benefit costs based on the state's payment error rate (PER). PER below 6 percent = 0 percent. PER between 6-7.99 percent = 5 percent. PER 8-9.99 percent = 10 percent. PER at 10 percent or higher = 15 percent. Minnesota is currently in the 10 percent or higher category (10.79 percent per SNAP Report 09/17/2025).

Expanded SNAP work requirements: expands the work requirement for individuals without children from age 54 to 64 and for those with children aged 14+. While Carver County supports able bodied adults working, this change does add to staff workload.

SNAP administrative cost share: reduces the federal contribution from 50 percent to 25 percent, making Carver County liable for 75 percent of the costs to administer the program.

Medicaid work requirements: 80 hours per month of work, education, or "community engagement" for individuals aged 19 to 64. While Carver County supports this change, tracking the data to show compliance will be difficult given the outdated technology (green screen) and will add staff time to manage.

Medicaid – more frequent eligibility determinations: Carver County must conduct eligibility redeterminations at least every six months for the Medicaid expansion population, versus annually. This doubles the workload for our Financial Eligibility Specialists.

SNAP AND MEDICAL COST SHIFTS: MITIGATE IMPACT TO COUNTIES

REQUESTED POSITION

Minnesota's Health and Human Services system is state-supervised and County-administered. Counties like Carver, which have lower SNAP error rates than the state average, should not be penalized through statewide cost-sharing. Since the state controls the system and the error rate is a statewide measure, the state should take responsibility of the cost.

The outdated MAXIS system is a major contributor to errors and inefficiencies. While a full overhaul is needed, immediate short-term fixes like reducing manual workarounds and improving system integration are critical to lowering error rates and easing staff burden.

MODERNIZE HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES TECHNOLOGY

BACKGROUND

County Health and Human Services staff utilize archaic, disjointed, and inefficient systems to process benefits for eligible Minnesotans. System modernization should be focused on simplifying the process, exchanging data to improve service delivery, and improving efficiency to strengthen program integrity and encourage staff retention.

1. There is an urgency to complete technology updates related to federal SNAP and Medicaid changes, specifically work requirements and increased eligibility checks. Immediate fixes must be part of the short-term solution.
2. It is critical that the system be modernized while also maintaining the existing system. A new system should not replace existing and outdated siloed systems with new siloed systems. A system should be created where core government functions work together where client data should be entered once and available for different program applications (e.g., SSIS, MAXIS, MMIS, PRISM, & MEC2). Systems should contain easily accessible dashboards, reporting, and data extraction to improve monitoring and fight fraud.

Local taxpayers are paying for an inefficient system with no end in sight, and despite previous investments from the state legislature, systems have not been fixed or modernized. To date, the legislature has approved \$200 million for human service system modernization; most of the funding has not been spent. What has been spent has not resulted in improvements to the work carried out by counties on behalf of the state.

REQUESTED POSITION

Support immediate action for the following:

1. Automate movement of MNBenefits data into MAXIS or fund all County efforts to use scripts to do this work.
2. Improve access to data so counties can monitor SNAP and Medicaid accuracy.
3. Improve availability of state training to get staff trained faster and provide refresher training to help improve statewide accuracy.
4. Fund incorporating County-developed systems and processes (e.g., Blue Zone scripts) into the state system. This would reduce work arounds, duplication, and errors and would speed up application processing.
5. Direct the state to vigorously lead the rollout of a new, long-term, centralized system that benefits clients, counties, and the state equally.

MENTAL HEALTH: DOES NOT MEET MEDICAL CRITERIA (DNMC)

BACKGROUND

There continues to be a bed shortage at state-operated facilities and facilities are at capacity, creating long waitlists and a back log at Anoka Metro Regional Treatment Center where residents deemed Mentally Ill and Dangerous (MI&D) are “stuck” at a higher level of care than is needed and they are unable to move to a lesser level of care state-operated bed in a timely manner. When this occurs, Carver County is billed 100 percent of the daily cost of care, **which costs \$2,492 per day**. The 2025 legislature did not approve extending the “Does Not Meet Criteria” County relief beyond June 30, 2025, and instead repurposed those dollars into improving bed capacity.

While approving funding to create approximately 50 beds at the “Miller” building is a start, counties estimate that there are roughly 300 DNMC clients statewide at any given time. Charging the full cost of care to counties when counties have no influence over placement options in this situation, only pulls local taxpayer dollars away from local, preventive, upstream mental health services for the community.

REQUESTED POSITION

- Reinstate financial relief for counties, effective July 1, 2026, and indefinitely until the state has created adequate capacity to house Mentally Ill and Dangerous (MI&D) clients at their appropriate level of care.
- Fund the state to fast track the creation of additional state-operated beds.

PROTECT COUNTY TRANSPORTATION FUNDING

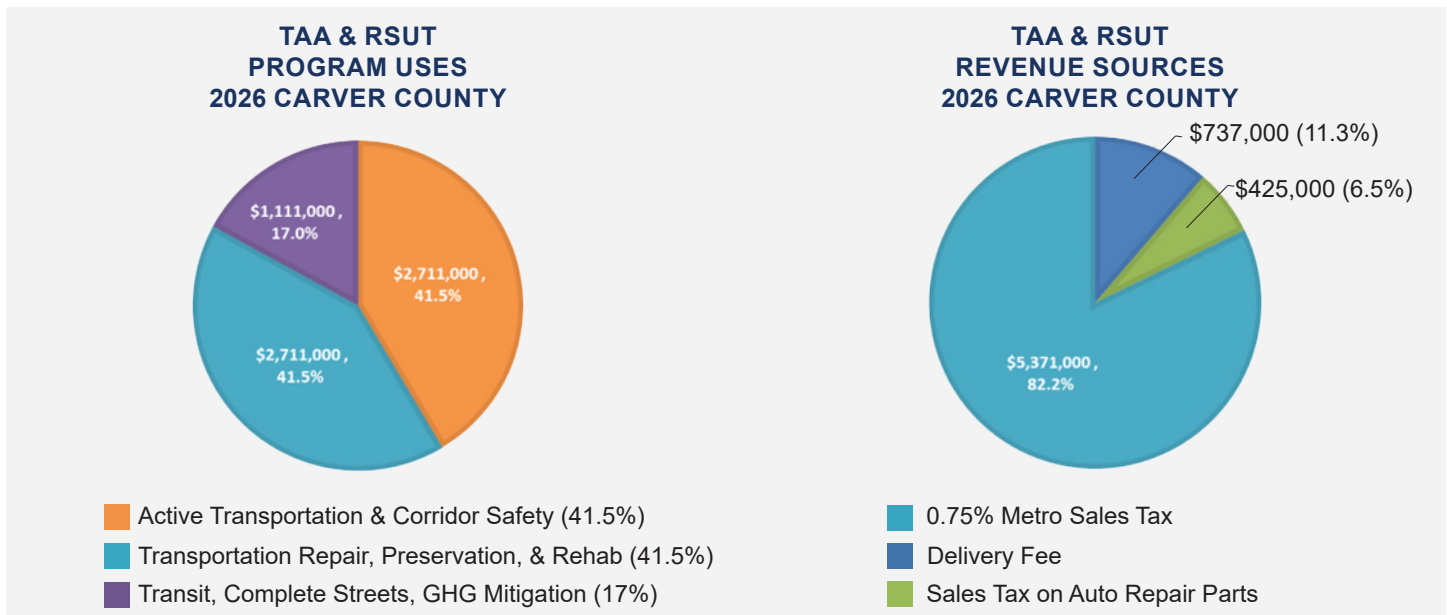
BACKGROUND

The 2023 Legislature created new revenue programs for County transportation including the Transportation Advancement Account (TAA) and Regional Transportation Sales and Use Tax (RSUT). The TAA is funded by sales tax on auto repair parts and the new 50 cent delivery fee. The RSUT is funded by a three-quarters of one percent sales tax on retail sales and uses in the metropolitan area.

Metropolitan Counties must use these funds as follows:

- 41.5 percent for active transportation and transportation corridor safety studies.
- 41.4 percent for repair, preservation and rehabilitation of transportation systems, and roadway replacement without expansion.
- 17 percent for transit, complete streets, and greenhouse gas mitigation.

Carver County is expected to receive approximately \$6.5 million in 2026. The new revenue is critical to keep up with inflation and enhance multimodal transportation infrastructure.



The metropolitan area sales tax provides more than 80 percent of the revenue to these multimodal programs. The seven metro Counties receive 17 percent of this tax with Metro Transit receiving 83 percent. Furthermore, the five suburban Counties (Anoka, Carver, Washington, Scott, and Dakota) share about half of the 17 percent while generating 30 percent of the sales tax revenue. Any reduction to the County share is unacceptable.

REQUESTED POSITION

Support legislation to protect or increase the share of the Regional Transportation Sales and Use Tax going to metropolitan Counties.

MAINTAIN CURRENT OPT-OUT TRANSIT MODEL

BACKGROUND

Carver County supports maintaining the current opt-out transit model, which allows suburban communities to operate their own transit services independently of Metro Transit. This model has enabled agencies such as Southwest Transit, who serves communities like Chanhassen, Eden Prairie, Chaska, Victoria, and Carver, to deliver efficient, innovative, and community-responsive service. Local governance has been a key factor in ensuring that transit offerings are tailored to the specific needs of these communities.

Concerns have been raised about legislative proposals that would consolidate all transit operations under Metro Transit. Such consolidation would eliminate local control, reduce service adaptability, and risk degrading the quality of transit services that suburban residents depend on. A centralized, one-size-fits-all approach does not reflect the diverse needs of the Twin Cities metro area, where suburban communities often require different solutions than urban cores.

REQUESTED POSITION

Carver County asks the Minnesota Legislature and the Metropolitan Council to:

- Preserve the opt-out transit model to maintain local oversight and service flexibility.
- Oppose any proposals that would eliminate suburban transit agencies such as Southwest Transit.
- Support legislation that ensures a fair and equitable distribution of regional sales tax revenues to all transit providers, including those serving suburban areas.

METROPOLITAN COUNCIL'S PARK FUTURE REIMBURSEMENT PROGRAM

BACKGROUND

Since the early 1990s, the Parks Future Reimbursement Program has enabled implementing agencies to request council approval to acquire land and develop regional parks (and trails) using agency funds and then be eligible for reimbursement in the future using council tax exempt bonds (no state funding has supported this program). The Parks Future Reimbursement Program is part of the council's Regional Parks Bonding Program and has policy guidance from the Regional Parks Policy Plan and the Parks Fund Distribution Policy.

In 2021, the council stopped reimbursing agencies for certain eligible expenses because the Metropolitan Council's Bond Counsel determined that the Parks Future Reimbursement Program did not comply with IRS regulations. Since 2021, council and agency parks staff have unsuccessfully brainstormed potential new options to restart reimbursing agencies for all eligible expenses.

According to council records, \$8.6 million in Carver County taxpayer funds have been spent on eligible expenses (primarily acquiring land for Lake Waconia Regional Park) but Carver County has only received \$4.4 million from the Parks Future Reimbursement Program, which means Carver County taxpayers have not been reimbursed for **\$4.2 million** in eligible expenses.

REQUESTED POSITION

Support legislation to reimburse Carver County taxpayers for spending **\$4.2 million** acquiring land and developing regional parks and trails.

SUPPORT FOR PHASE III OF THE LAKE WACONIA REGIONAL PARK DEVELOPMENT

BACKGROUND

Lake Waconia Regional Park is a 160-acre Metropolitan Regional Park, minimally developed, and located on the second largest lake in the Twin Cities area. Carver County received past funding from the state for the phased development of Lake Waconia Regional Park.

In 2018, the county received \$1.5 million of state bonds for phase I of the park development, which included site grading, installation of municipal utility lines, and the construction of roadways and parking lots.

In 2020, the County received an additional \$2.5 million of state bonds for phase II of development. The funds were secured helped construct a new waterfront pavilion with restrooms, rental concessions, and assist in making utility connections. Carver County provided **\$7 million**, 70 percent of the project costs, in local funds towards phase I and phase II developments.

REQUESTED POSITION

Provide **\$3.264 million** in state funds for predesign, design, and construction of a playground, parking lot, trails, walkways, fishing piers, and other site amenities at Lake Waconia Regional Park.

SUPPORT FOR THE REGIONAL PARK SYSTEM BONDING BILL

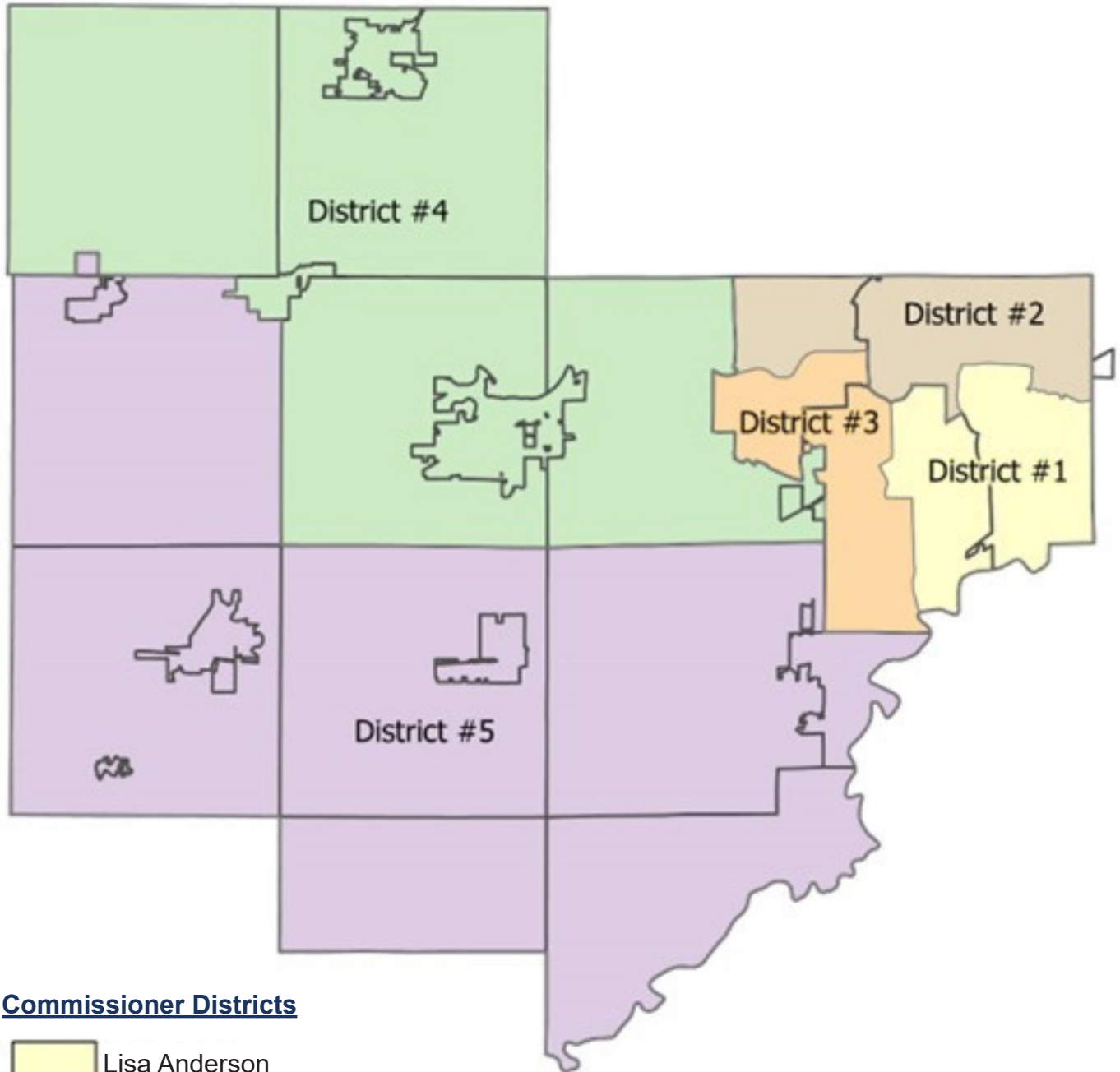
BACKGROUND

The Metropolitan Council's Regional Park Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for 2026 proposes a total of **\$25 million**, consisting of \$15 million in state bonds and a \$10 million match from Metropolitan Council bonds. This funding supports capital improvements across the Metropolitan Regional Parks System. If fully funded, Carver County's estimated share would be approximately **\$900,000**, as calculated by the Metropolitan Council.





REQUESTED POSITION

Support legislation that provides up to **\$25 million** for the 2026 Regional Park CIP, including \$15 million in state bonding and a \$10 million Metropolitan Council match.

CARVER COUNTY MAP OF DISTRICTS



Commissioner Districts

-  Lisa Anderson
-  Tom Workman
-  Matt Udermann
-  Tim Lynch
-  John P. Fahey



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