



Sustainable Funding for a Safe County Transportation System

THE CHALLENGE

Counties are responsible for nearly half of our state’s roads and bridges, but the system in place for providing resources to maintain them remains inadequate.

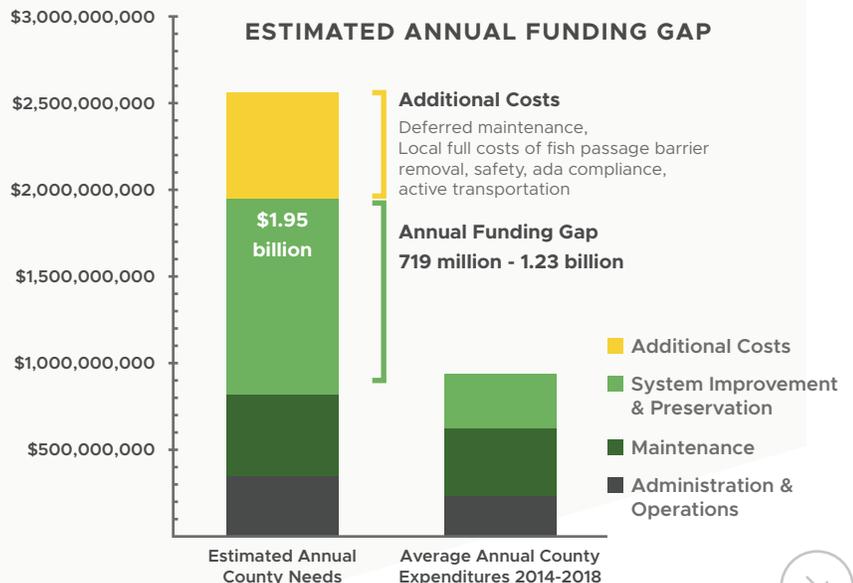
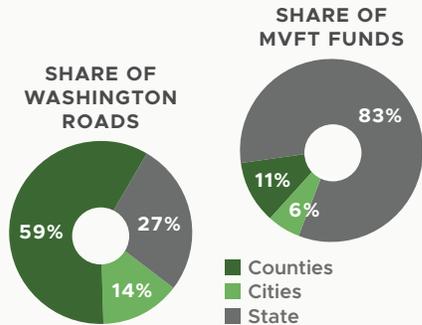
County property tax, the largest single revenue source, is capped at 1% growth plus the value of new construction annually, far below the rate of inflation alone. While state gas tax has more than doubled over the past 20 years, the distribution to counties has remained relatively flat and higher vehicle fuel efficiency is resulting in decreased gas tax collections further undermining our long-term ability to keep transportation infrastructure in good repair.

Bottom line – current local revenue options and state-shared resources are not keeping up with the ongoing and growing needs of county roads.

THE FIX

Provide additional state-shared revenue in the supplemental Transportation Budget for the preservation and maintenance of the local transportation system.

Maintaining and preserving our transportation system should be the foremost priority of transportation investments statewide. As owners of nearly 50 percent of the transportation system, counties should receive a more equitable share of revenue designed to fund state-wide transportation needs. Please support increasing direct distributions of state-shared transportation revenue to counties in the supplemental 2025-27 Transportation Budget.





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TRANSPORTATION REVENUE
PRIORITY CONTINUED

Legislative Action Counties Support to Benefit Local Transportation

1. Provide funding to establish the newly authorized County Local Road Grant Program (\$2.2 million).

Currently, there are no state or federal grant programs to preserve and improve county local roads. This means that approximately 49,000 lane miles of county roads, over 36% of the total lane miles in the state, have no opportunity to fund improvements other than through local sources such as the county road fund. As you can imagine, WSAC was very grateful when the legislature established a new grant program to address this challenge during the 2025 legislative session. We now request that the legislature provide enough initial funding to allow CRAB to hire a grant program administrator, reimburse counties for the design costs of preparing projects for construction in the 27-29 biennium, and draft rules and project scoring criteria for the administration of the program.



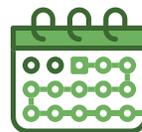
3. Fully fund the Brian Abbott Fish Barrier Removal Board's (FBRB) project list (\$38 million).

WSAC requests that the supplemental Capital Budget fully fund the FBRB project list with an additional \$38 million. There are over 8,000 locally owned fish barriers, with an average cost of \$1.8 million to correct. As the rules and regulations associated with culvert replacement get more complicated, costs increase. With limited local resources to fund this infrastructure and few statewide resources available, fully funding the FBRB project list is crucial. WSAC supports the FBRB's coordinated approach to identifying priority investments and leveraging the benefits of other upstream and downstream fish passage projects to efficiently advance recovery.

2. Increase funding for the Reducing Rural Roadway Departures program (\$4 million).

Traffic safety is a top priority and major concern for counties. In 2023, traffic deaths were the highest in our state since 1990, with 810 tragic losses of life. This trend is unacceptable. Of the 810 traffic deaths in 2023, 46% involved a lane departure. Historically, the County Safety program, managed by WSDOT Local Programs, has utilized scarce federal funding for projects aimed at reducing fatal and serious injury crashes on county roads through engineering improvements and countermeasures. The program has been oversubscribed during this critical time.

During the 2022 legislative session, the legislature established the new Reducing Rural Roadway Departures Program in the Move Ahead Transportation Package. It provided \$4 million in additional state funding for these projects each year. This is a trend in the right direction. Please help decrease traffic fatalities in our state by increasing funding for this program in the supplemental Transportation Budget.



4. Improve and Make Permanent the Federal Fund Exchange Program.

WSAC appreciates the state establishing a Federal Fund Exchange Pilot Program during the 2023-25 biennium and now asks that the supplemental Transportation Budget include the necessary appropriations and changes to implement the Recommendations to Streamline Local Project Delivery Report (Joint Transportation Committee June 2025).

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