

Lancaster County Board of Commissioners

Legislative Proposals for 2023 Session | **New Proposals**

Funding for East Beltway. Transportation issues are vital to keeping Nebraska economically competitive, and physical transportation infrastructure is an integral component of the supply chain that supports our continued local, region, and statewide growth in a competitive global economy. Now that the City of Lincoln's South Beltway is nearly complete in record time due to State of Nebraska leadership combined with significant local support, the East Beltway remains the final uncompleted portion of the expressway system around the City of Lincoln. In anticipation of completing this project, the City of Lincoln and the County of Lancaster have invested millions of dollars in securing the East Beltway corridor for future development. To ensure the State of Nebraska's continued economic growth, state investment is critical to realize the completion of the expressway system serving the City of Lincoln and Lancaster County.

County Bridge Match Program. The 2016 Transportation Innovation Act created the County Bridge Match Program. Pursuant to Section 39-2805, the Program will sunset on June 30, 2023. This successful Program should be extended beyond 2023 to ensure this Program's funding continues to be available to meet the needs of counties across the State of Nebraska.

Provide for County Bridges under the Political Subdivisions Construction Alternatives Act. This bill mirrors successful legislation adopted within the context of construction of the South Beltway, namely LB616 from 2019, by authorizing political subdivisions to pay for bridge repair projects over a period of time that extends beyond the completion of the project. This bill provides an innovative solution to our infrastructure needs that does not seek to increase property taxes.

Appropriations Bill to Cover Costs of State Public Assistance Programs (Medicaid). Pursuant to Neb. Rev. Stat. § 68-130, counties currently pay the cost of maintaining office and service facilities for the Department of Health and Human Service ("DHHS") to administer Medicaid. A bill is sought to appropriate adequate funds to pay the cost of maintaining DHHS' Medicaid office and service facilities.

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Legislative Proposals for 2023 Session | **Standing Priorities**

Property Tax Relief. Property tax relief continues to be the top legislative priority for Lancaster County. It is of utmost importance that Lancaster County preserve its ability to utilize Inheritance Tax revenue to provide significant property tax relief to Lancaster County residents. In addition, pressure on the property tax can be reduced by eliminating unfunded mandates that primarily benefit the State, including the obligation of counties to pay rent for certain Health and Human Services facilities under Neb. Rev. Stat. § 68-130. Finally, decreasing reliance on the property tax can be achieved by diversifying county revenue sources. Potential new revenue sources for counties could include:

- Tobacco tax increase
- Occupation tax on wineries
- Remove sales tax exemption on soda, energy drinks, and candy, and earmark the proceeds for property tax relief
- Increase statutory fees to keep pace with the cost of the service being provided
- Establish reasonable fees for services provided by the county engineers for issuance of driveway permits, right-of-way permits, subdivision reviews, load permits, and for petitions to vacate or abandon a county public road

Funding for Adult Criminal Justice System Reform. Lancaster County's jail population and probation housing costs have increased as a direct result of 2015 Neb. Laws LB 605. Funding for the County Justice Reinvestment Grant Program created under LB 605 should be maintained or increased to help offset these additional costs. Additional property tax savings could be realized through criminal justice reforms such as no cash bail, and mandating home arrest for inmates who qualify for work release and for persons convicted for nonsupport of their children.

Funding for Juvenile Justice Reform. Juvenile justice reform under 2013 Neb. Laws LB 561 is not being adequately funded. With the passage of 2018 Neb. Laws LB 1112, adequate funding becomes even more critical. Additional funding should be appropriated for community-based post adjudication services, and existing funding levels for the Juvenile Justice Community Based Aid Program should be maintained or increased.

Public Building Commissions, Joint Public Agencies, and Interlocal Cooperation. Public building commissions, joint public agencies, and interlocal cooperation are vital to Lancaster County's ability to provide sustainable services to a safe, healthy, and diverse community. The power to cooperate with other governmental entities to benefit our citizens through these joint entities and agreements must be preserved. Neb. Rev. Stat. §§ 13-1301 through 13-1312 allow Lancaster County and the City of Lincoln to utilize the Public Building Commission to jointly acquire, construct, remodel, renovate, and finance buildings, structures, and facilities for their joint use. Without this mechanism, our citizens would lose the benefits of economies of operation that add to the effectiveness of the City of Lincoln and Lancaster County and would have to suffer the inconvenience of separate City of Lincoln and Lancaster County buildings, structures, and facilities.

Similarly, the Interlocal Cooperation Act, Neb. Rev. Stat. §§ 13-801 to 13-827, and the Joint Public Agency Act, Neb. Rev. Stat. §§ 13-2501 to 13-2550, allow Lancaster County to make the most efficient use of its taxing authority and other powers by enabling it to cooperate with other governmental units on a basis of mutual advantage and thereby to provide services and facilities in a manner and pursuant to forms of governmental organization that accord best with geographic, economic, population, and other factors influencing the needs and development of the local community. The sum of the cooperation between Lancaster County and other governmental units provides a greater benefit to all of our citizens than each partner could provide in isolation.

Support for a Second Water Supply for the City of Lincoln. It is imperative to begin planning now to ensure that the City of Lincoln has the capacity to meet the water demands of our growing County. Identifying and securing a second source of water for the City of Lincoln will strengthen city, county, regional, and statewide economic and environmental resilience for decades to come.