

Anoka County

Winter 2005

News

Governor Pawlenty: Northstar commuter rail is a "priority"

Northstar commuter rail is on the move.

Spurred by a \$23 million interim financing plan introduced by Governor Pawlenty in August, the project is proceeding with land acquisition for transit stations, advanced design work, and negotiations with Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway.

Securing the \$23 million, a mix of federal, county, and Metropolitan Council funds, keeps the Northstar project eligible for \$10 million in federal funds. In addition, the funding plan



"This plan will allow us to keep Northstar moving forward while we work to secure legislative funding for a state bonding bill."

Board Chair Dan Erhart

keeps the project on schedule for the targeted 2008 completion date and saves more than \$11 million in construction cost inflation.

"Governor Pawlenty has shown great leadership with this funding proposal," said Anoka County Board Chair Dan Erhart. "This plan will allow us to keep Northstar moving forward while we work to secure legislative funding for

a state bonding bill."

The first phase of the Northstar commuter rail proposal is for service on a 40-mile segment along Highways 10 and 47 from Big Lake to Minneapolis. Stations will be located in Big Lake, Elk River, Anoka, Coon Rapids, Fridley and Minneapolis. The route was recently modified to meet the Federal Transportation Administration's (FTA) new, more stringent cost-effectiveness standard.

The Northstar project was a critical element of the Governor's Capital Investment recommendations to the 2004 Minnesota Legislature. Governor Pawlenty told a business group in November that he'll "go to the mat" this session for Northstar. The total construction cost is projected to be \$265 million, with 50 percent coming from the federal government to match a state/local commitment of \$132.5 million.



Governor Tim Pawlenty speaks in support of Northstar commuter rail at a rally at the Anoka County Government Center. Joining him are State Representatives Jim Abeler and Kathy Tingelstad.

"Residents living along the Northstar Corridor strongly support commuter rail," Erhart said. "It is vital that we proceed with this project to help reduce ever-increasing traffic congestion and spur economic development in the area."

Public safety and transportation are budget priorities for 2005

The Anoka County Board of Commissioners has adopted a 2005 budget of \$212.7 million, which would result in a tax levy of \$103 million. This budget represents a one percent increase in spending over last year.

The county is focusing on two primary areas in 2005 -- public safety and transportation. "Maintaining our high quality of life is a priority," said Anoka County Board Chair Dan Erhart. "Improved transportation and public safety are key to that effort."

In the area of public safety, a new booking station will open in Blaine in 2005, improving law enforcement coverage on the county's east side. An additional sheriff's deputy is also being hired to provide greater coverage and help avoid costly overtime pay. Other public safety related budget initiatives include planning for an expanded patrol station, completing implementation of a new county attorney case management system, purchasing new computer software to better manage public health, and initiating design of a new county morgue/forensic analysis facility. Anoka County also has improved public safety with implementation of the 800 megahertz radio system in 2004 to allow better

communication among law enforcement and emergency response agencies.

In the area of transportation, the county is emphasizing projects that will improve safety, reduce accidents, and ease congestion in busy commercial areas. Key projects include planning for major improvements at the Highway 65/Highway 242 intersection in Blaine, and the I-35W exit and entrance ramps at Lake Drive near the Lino Lakes Town Center. Major construction projects include county highways surrounding the Ramsey

Town Center project, along with reconstruction of Main Street east of I-35E in Lino Lakes. The county is also coordinating \$10 million in improvements at the Anoka County airport, for which the county will be funded over the next 15 to 20 years through additional revenues generated at the airport.

"Improved transportation is crucial for public safety and the economic vitality of our county," said Commissioner Dennis Berg. "Our transportation system has to adequately move citizens to and from work, and allow businesses to move their goods to market in order to meet the economic needs of the community."

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Commissioner Dennis Berg

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Vikings hold scrimmage at National Sports Center

Anoka County's Vikings fans had a rare opportunity to see Daunte Culpepper, Randy Moss and other favorite players up close and personal at a preseason practice and scrimmage August 24 at the National Sports Center, one mile from the proposed new Vikings stadium in Blaine. The National Sports Center hosts more than three million sports fans each year at various events.



Fans enjoyed tailgating before the Vikings practice and scrimmage at the National Sports Center in Blaine.

Along with the practice and scrimmage, activities included tailgating, interactive games, autograph sessions with Vikings' alumni, photo opportunities with Vikings cheerleaders, and other fan-friendly activities. The event was held in conjunction with the inaugural USA Football Classic, youth football's premier preseason event involving youth football teams, coaches, and officials.

Anoka County and the City of Blaine are partnering in an effort to attract a new Vikings stadium as part of a larger development called "The Preserve at Rice Creek." Located just 15 minutes from both Minneapolis and St. Paul, the 740-acre development would include:

- **The Stadium Complex:** A 70,000 seat fixed-roof domed stadium, team headquarters and training facilities, 20,000 surface parking spaces ideal for tailgating, a medical center, two 250-room business class hotels and conference center, Vikings-themed retail and a Hall of Fame.
- **Retail Shops at the Preserve:** 650,000 square feet of retail and entertainment with public plazas and pedestrian corridors.
- **Corporate Center:** 1.3 million square feet of corporate headquarters, offices, and commercial space.
- **Residence at the Preserve:** 200 units of upscale townhomes.
- **Rice Creek Conservancy:** 250 acres of preserved wetlands and trails.

The total economic and fiscal impacts of the development is estimated at \$100 million per year, not including special events such as the Super Bowl or NCAA Final Four. "This project would attract more than \$1 billion in private investment and create 3,900 construction jobs and 8,700 permanent jobs," said Anoka County Commissioner Margaret Langfeld. "It would make Anoka County the premiere sports entertainment destination for the entire region."

The project would create nearly a threefold increase in the market value of the development site, strengthening the property tax base by approximately \$10.8 million for the City of Blaine, \$10.8 million for Anoka County, and \$5.4 million for each of the Spring Lake Park and Centennial School Districts. This represents a 20 percent increase in the

property tax base for the two school districts alone, and will allow the schools, county and



Vikings Coach Mike Tice walks off the field as the Blaine High School Marching Band entertains the crowd.

city to hold down property taxes, reducing the burden on household property taxes.

The Vikings each year pay approximately \$10-\$12 million in property, income, sales, and ticket taxes. Over the next three years alone, the Vikings will bring into the state an average of \$89 million per year from NFL revenue



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Commissioner Margaret Langfeld

sharing, which is primarily TV revenue that would not come into the state otherwise.

Go to www.AnokaCounty.us/stadium for more information.

Protect yourself from identity theft

by Anoka County Sheriff Bruce Andersohn



We live in the information age. Unfortunately, the same conveniences computers offer for the storage and passing of information have also created a new type of thief -- one who does not steal your physical belongings but rather steals your identity.

Identity theft occurs when thieves access your personal information. Information from businesses is stolen by dishonest employees or by outsiders hacking into computers. Information can be obtained by rummaging through home and business trash containers or dumps. Thieves steal credit reports from persons who have legitimate access to such information, and credit card and debit card numbers in Internet and telephone scams. Thieves also steal wallets and purses containing identification, credit cards, and bank card information, or steal mail, including bank and credit card statements, pre-approved credit offers, and tax information.

Once thieves have personal information, they may go on a spending spree, open new credit card accounts, take out loans, establish wireless phone service, or use counterfeit checks or debit cards -- all of which can wreak financial havoc for you. Victims can spend

years trying to restore their good name and correct inaccuracies that have destroyed their credit record.

As with any type of crime, preventing identity theft is easier than restoring your good name. We all need to be wise managers of our personal information. That begins by using passwords with credit cards, bank, and phone accounts. Avoid passwords using easily obtained information such as your mother's maiden name or your birth date. Secure personal information in your home, especially if you have roommates, employ outside help such as a cleaning service, or have service work done in your home. Never give out personal information over the phone, through the mail, or over the Internet unless you have initiated the contact or are sure you know with whom you are dealing. When in doubt, check!

Safeguard your mail and trash from theft. Deposit outgoing mail in post office boxes at your post office rather than in your unsecured mailbox. Remove mail on a daily basis. To thwart those who might pick through trash or recycling bins, shred charge receipts, credit applications, insurance forms, check and bank statements, or charge card and credit offers that you receive in the mail.

Never carry your social security card with you. Give out your social security number only when it is absolutely necessary. Limit the number of credit cards and identification you carry. Monitor your accounts, paying close attention to billing and account statements. Never leave items that could be used to gain access to your personal information in your vehicle overnight, even if your vehicle is locked.

Secure your computer by updating virus protection software regularly. Avoid downloading files sent by strangers. These files may contain viruses that could expose your system to the theft of your personal information.

Preventing I.D. theft is no longer a passive endeavor. You must work diligently to monitor all aspects of your personal information to prevent the loss of your identity and, oftentimes, your good name.

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NEWS BRIEFS

• **Increasing the services available at the Eastern Anoka County Human Service Center in Lexington** has made it more convenient for area residents to access employment services. A new computer station replicates information available at the Minnesota WorkForce Center in Blaine.

• **Registration is ongoing for the Head Start Program** of Anoka/Washington County, a multi-faceted child and family development program for income-eligible households. Head Start is designed to help young children, aged birth to five, and their families achieve their full potential. For information, call 763-783-4300.

• An Anoka County veteran finally has the Purple Heart commendation he earned 35 years ago while serving with the U.S. Army in Vietnam. **Roger A. Johnson, Blaine**, was presented with the Purple Heart during a special flag-raising ceremony at the Anoka County Fair in July. Johnson's wife, Ginnie, contacted Anoka County Veterans Affairs Director Duane Krueger who worked with Johnson for more than two years to fill out the extensive paperwork and obtain the necessary documentation to secure the medal.

• Senior citizens and persons with disabilities may receive **free assistance filling out and filing tax forms** including income tax, property tax, and rent refund forms. Volunteers who have been trained and tested by the Internal Revenue Service and the Minnesota Department of Revenue will be

available at sites throughout the county from February 1 to April 14, 2005. For more information, call the Anoka County Tax Assistance Information Line at 763-422-6923.



Anoka County Commissioner Rhonda Sivarajah visits with Blaine Police Chief Dave Johnson at a recent open house at the Eastern Anoka County Human Service Center.

• Anoka County conducted a **simulated emergency response exercise** in August, making it the first local public health department in the state to conduct a comprehensive public health emergency exercise. The exercise allowed county public health responders to rehearse procedures if there were a need for mass medication dispensing during an emergency.

• More than **one million people visited libraries** in the Anoka County Library system last year, checking out more than three million items. The Northtown and Rum River libraries continue to be among the busiest in the entire metro area, the library's Web site: www.anoka.lib.mn.us -- also was used more than one million times in 2003.

• Construction has begun on **The Oaks of Lake George**, a 52-unit **senior housing complex in Oak Grove** for residents age 55 and older. The \$6.2 million project is being built by the Anoka County Housing and Redevelopment Authority in cooperation with the City of Oak Grove. For more information, contact Mary Beth Davis, Great Lakes Management, at 763-377-1800.

• Residents may obtain passports at the Anoka County License Centers in Anoka, Blaine, Coon Rapids, Columbia Heights, and Ham Lake. License Center staff also can assist with

fishing licenses, motor vehicle registration, tabs, title transfer, and birth and death certificates. All License Center offices are open weekdays 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. and Saturday 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. For a complete list of available services, visit the county's Web site at www.AnokaCounty.us and click on "Licenses & Permits."

• **William Schluessell, Coon Rapids, a U.S. Army veteran** who served in Operation Overlord during World War II, recently was presented with the Normandy Medal of the Jubilee of Liberty to commemorate his service in the D-Day invasion.



William Schluessell

• Families visiting **Anoka County's Riverfront Regional Park** in Fridley are enjoying a new playground thanks in part to a \$10,000 donation from United Defense Corporation. The playground is located across the street from a United Defense manufacturing plant on land formerly owned by the defense contractor.



Attending a ceremony to dedicate the new playground at Riverfront Regional Park were (from left) Keith Howe, United Defense Vice President, General Manager - Armament Systems; and Anoka County Commissioners Dick Lang, Dave McCauley, and Jim Kordiak.

• Anoka County recently unveiled its new 800 megahertz public safety radio communications system. The **new radio system improves emergency communications** between the county's 911 central communications and local police and fire departments, resulting in decreased response times.

The \$12.5 million system was partially funded by nearly \$2.5 million in homeland security grants.

• **Services are available for Anoka County veterans** who need help dealing with mental health issues. Veterans or their family members are encouraged to contact the Anoka County Veterans Service Office at 763-323-5290 or go online to www.AnokaCounty.us/veterans.



Roger A. Johnson holds the Purple Heart presented to him by Mike Pugliese, Deputy Commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs. Johnson's wife Ginnie also was present at the ceremony.

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In the area of human services, funding is being provided to coordinate a multi-agency effort called the Partnership for Family Success to help bring families in the most difficult circumstances to self-sufficiency. Also, the Elder Network Program, a new initiative beginning in mid-2005, will train volunteers to connect senior citizens to services that help battle isolation and depression among the county's rapidly increasing elderly population.

Throughout county government, only 7.8 new positions are being created. While no layoffs are planned, 72.65 positions are being held vacant without funding in 2005.

State budget shifts will affect the 2005 budget, requiring local property taxpayers to cover the cost of state-required services previously paid for by statewide income and sales tax revenues. For example, the state now requires county jails to take state prisoners with sentences of six months or less -- some 20 additional prisoners in Anoka County jails each day -- while providing very little reimbursement to the county. As a result, Anoka County is being forced to pay

approximately \$400,000 in additional costs. The state also shifted some \$1 million in costs to Anoka County for care of adults with mental illness, developmental disabilities, or other handicaps, who are in state hospitals or intermediate care facilities. It is not yet known



"The state is to be commended for moving forward to complete the statewide assumption of local court costs, but Anoka County property taxpayers won't feel the benefit until 2006."

Commissioner Jim Kordiak

what the state's budget situation will be in 2005, how the governor and legislature will respond, and whether county services will be impacted.

"If the state continues to shift state program costs onto local property taxpayers as they've done in recent years, it will continue to be a challenge for the county to maintain even basic needed services for our citizens," said Commissioner Margaret Langfeld.

Other state shifts will have a mixed impact on county budgets. For example, rather than providing state aid to counties to administer district courts, the state has assumed jurisdiction of district court costs, except for the cost of court facilities. The Anoka County court system, one of the last to be impacted by this change, will be taken over by the state July 1, 2005.

"The state is to be commended for moving forward to complete the statewide assumption of local court costs, but Anoka County property taxpayers won't feel the benefit until 2006," said Commissioner Jim Kordiak. "While the county's cost of administering courts will be cut in half in 2005, our courts-related state aid is being cut 75 percent, creating a nearly one million dollar hit to the county budget in 2005," Kordiak said.

County taxes on a \$190,000 residential home will increase from \$669 a year to \$724 a year, or \$4.58 per month. County taxes on a \$500,000 business will go down from \$3,258 a year to \$3,243 a year. The proportion of property taxes paid by residential versus business property is affected by state law.



County advocates for the rights of crime victims

by Anoka County Attorney Robert M.A. Johnson

If you are a crime victim, know a crime victim, or have been a witness to a crime, you should be aware of your rights as a person impacted by a crime. The criminal justice system has come to understand how important victims and witnesses are to the proper administration of justice. There is a great deal of assistance and information available for those impacted by crime. The Anoka County Attorney's Office created one of the first victim-witness units in the state and is recognized as a leader in the provision of services for crime victims.

As a victim, you have the right to be notified of:

- The content of plea bargain agreements
- Changes in the schedule of court proceedings for a victim who has been subpoenaed or requested to testify
- The final disposition of the case
- Any pending appeals by the defendant, including the right to attend the oral argument or hearing
- Sentence modifications for the offender, including the date, time, and location of the review

- Release of the offender from prison or custodial institution
- Transfer of the offender from prison or custodial institution
- Escape of the offender from prison or custodial institution
- The offender's petition for expungement
- The right to request restitution and apply for reparations

Crime victims also have the right to participate in prosecution. Victims may:

- Request a speedy trial
- Provide input in a pre-trial diversion decision
- Object to a proposed disposition or sentence
- Bring a supportive person to the pre-trial hearing
- Attend plea agreement hearings
- Object orally or in writing to a plea agreement at the hearing
- Inform the court of the crime's impact at the sentencing hearing
- Attend the sentencing hearing
- Request a probation review hearing

Crime victims also have the right to apply for financial assistance (reparations) from the state if the victim suffered economic loss as a result of a violent crime and to ask the court to order the defendant to pay restitution.

The Victim Witness Program can provide training to community or professional groups interested in learning more about crime victims' rights, victim issues/concerns, the criminal justice system, sexual assault, and bullying. Brochures, posters, and other resource materials are also available.

A particularly devastating crime is sexual assault. Victims of sexual assault often have a very difficult time coming to terms with the harm they have suffered, both physically and psychologically. The County Attorney's Office has established a volunteer victim advocate program that responds 24/7 to victims of sexual assault. If you, or a person you know, is in need of such a service, please call the **Anoka County Attorney Victim Witness Program crisis line at 763-427-1212**. To volunteer for the victim advocate program, please call 763-323-5559.

Dave McCauley leaves county board after 11 years

Anoka County Commissioner Dave McCauley will be leaving office as of January 3, 2005. McCauley served 11 years as county commissioner for District 5. The district includes much of Coon Rapids, and also portions of Andover since redistricting after the 2000 census.

In his years of service to Anoka County, McCauley was a leader on many large initiatives, including the creation of Healthy Start -- a network of organizations that provides community support to young families to help them successfully raise their children. As chair of



Anoka County Commissioner Dave McCauley

the county's Parks and Recreation Committee since joining the county board in 1993, McCauley has been a leader in creating one of the largest and most widely-used county parks systems in the metro area.

McCauley served on the Metropolitan Radio Board and initiated the implementation of the county's new 800 megahertz emergency communications system. He also was past chair of

the Minnesota Community Health Services Advisory Committee and was a member of the Greater Twin Cities United Way and Coon Rapids Youth First Community Consortium.

Scott LeDoux elected to county board

Scott LeDoux, who has lived in Andover for more than 32 years and is known by many for his boxing career, will begin serving a four-year term on the Anoka County Board of Commissioners in January 2005.

As he enters his service on the Board, LeDoux said he is primarily interested in transportation issues, working with youth, crime prevention, and being involved with issues related to chemical dependency.

Anoka County Board of Commissioners

 Dennis D. Berg District 1	 Dick Lang District 2	 Margaret Langfeld District 3
 Jim Kordiak District 4	 Dave McCauley District 5	 Rhonda Sivarajah District 6
 Dan Erhart, Chair District 7		