

SUMMIT DISCUSSIONS

The WCHA, WTBA and several stakeholder groups met between 2009 and 2010 in an effort to develop proposals that would bridge the divide between public and private sectors. Some of the proposals contained in Motion 352 were similar to proposals developed in the Summit discussions. Given the considerable opposition to Motion 352 from members of the WCHA, the Task Force was asked should the WCHA pursue additional discussions with the private sector? The Task Force's opinion was that such discussions should be pursued and gave the following recommendations for the WCHA leadership to consider:

Local Force Account (LFA) - Private sector interests have pressed for elimination of LFA work by Counties with as offset in another program to keep the change fiscally neutral. The Task Force lists the following recommendations when considering this proposal:

- Increases to General Transportation Program for counties was the preferred offset program
- Preserve small LFA's (\$100k to \$150k) for continued use by counties
- State and Federal "transportation" projects administered by WIDOT (Surface Transportation Program, Rural, & Urban) shall be the only ones affected. Work funded by other state or federal agencies shall not be affected
- The loss of LFA work should be phased in over several years. Counties who have projects with an approved State Municipal Agreement (SMA) shall be allowed to complete their scheduled LFA.
- Full value of LFA to counties should be used to calculate offset. Full value goes beyond program dollars going to county, but also the support those dollars contributed to department operations

Local Road Improvement Program (LRIP) - As an offset for County operational changes, increases in County Highway Improvement Program (CHIP) funding was discussed. The Task Force has the following recommendations concerning CHIP and CHIP-D funding:

- Large increase to CHIP-D Program
- 80/20 cost share on CHIP-D projects
- Keep rules for CHIP the same including counties ability to perform work under a Cost Effectiveness Finding (CEF)
- Keep rules the same for Hot Mix Asphalt purchase projects
- Expand eligible projects and materials
- Drop proposed rewrite of LRIP administrative rules and keep the program simple

General Transportation Aids (GTA) - As an offset to changes to county operations and loss of LFA work, increase to GTA should be considered, as previously discussed. The following are Task Force recommendations concerning GTA changes:

- Raise "base" at a minimum to 2011 levels
- Guarantee counties a minimum share of cost return (return to historic percentage of 25 to 30%)
- Counties should be receiving a share of cost commensurate with their contribution to the highway system
- GTA should be a priority over State Trunk Highway Maintenance funding

State Trunk Highway (STH) Maintenance Funding - The private sector has indicated a desire to see County's focus on system preservation work (maintenance) including STH Maintenance. The Following are Task Force recommendations concerning STH maintenance:

- STH maintenance is not an offset program for other work, such as LFA's being done by counties. It is a state obligation to fund STH maintenance appropriately
- STH maintenance should be funded by the state at Level of Service model levels
- Any state budget proposal must have clear language funding Highway Department Routine Maintenance Agreements (RMA's)
- Consider trading Authority for Expenditure (AFE's) "improvement" projects for full funding of County RMA's. Counties should be allowed use of maintenance AFE's.
- The WIDOT needs to follow through on maintenance resource study contained in current budget bill
- WIDOT should promote consistency in maintenance support for all counties
- The State needs to indemnify counties for STH maintenance work or at least take more responsibility for level of service reductions

Maintenance Definition - The Task Force believes a good definition of what constitutes "maintenance" versus "improvement" is essential to ending controversy with respect to what should be public or private work on the State Highway System. The Task Force recommends the following:

- Use of AASHTO maintenance definitions with some consideration for small projects that could be considered improvements under the definition
- Allow small projects (\$25k-\$50k) to be completed by counties, even if they technically might be considered improvements
- Project dollar limitations would reflect county force account work only, not private work or materials included on the project
- There needs to be statewide consistency

General - The Task Force has several general recommendations as follows:

- The use of local dollars for local projects shall not be constrained in any way. Local decision making on the most cost-effective way to perform work on the local highway system must be protected
- Counties should be allowed to perform improvement work on County Trunk Highways within municipal boundaries without limitations
- Matching funds for state and federally funded county projects should be exempt from tax levy limitations
- There should be no restrictions on counties performing intergovernmental work and intergovernmental cooperation should be promoted, not constrained
- The WCHA should examine the possibility of trading federal aid program dollars (STP Urban and Rural) for a similar amount of state funding such as CHIP or GTA