

Staying in Touch

A communication from the Washington County Board of Commissioners

METRO Gold Line BRT Grand Opening is March 22



The grand opening of the METRO Gold Line Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) is almost here.

Join representatives from Washington County on Saturday, March 22, for a ribbon-cutting ceremony and community celebration at Woodlane Park & Ride (1100 Woodlane Dr., Woodbury, MN 55125).

10-11 a.m. – Ribbon-cutting ceremony

11 a.m.-2 p.m. – Community celebration activities, including

music and entertainment, games and activities for kids and families, Gold Line swag, and giveaways.

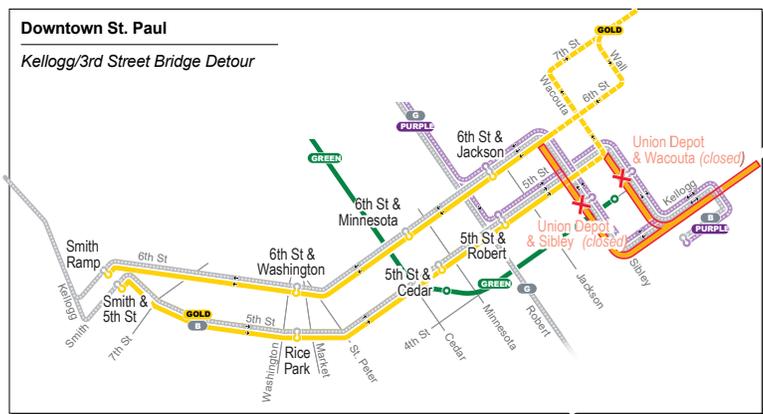
METRO Gold Line is Minnesota's first BRT line that operates primarily within lanes dedicated only for use by transit. On Gold Line, you will experience a comfortable ride and fast service with the following features:

- Frequent, all-day service in both directions, seven days a week.

Gold Line (continued on page 3)



Gold Line



	METRO Gold Line (Bus Rapid Transit)
	METRO Gold Line detour
	Park & Ride Lot
Current METRO lines	
	Green Line (Light Rail)
Planned METRO lines	
	Purple Line (Bus Rapid Transit)
	B, G & H lines (Bus Rapid Transit)

Karwoski elected board chair, Bigham vice chair for 2025

Commissioner Stan Karwoski, District 2, was elected in January to serve as Washington County Board of Commissioners' board chair in 2025.

Commissioner Karla Bigham, District 4, was elected to serve as board vice chair for the year.

This year marks Karwoski's 24th consecutive year of elected public service, serving 14 years on the Oakdale City Council, two years as Oakdale Mayor, and eight years on the County Board. Commissioner Karwoski's journey to elected service began after two unsuccessful local elections, but he continued to pursue opportunities to serve. As a county commissioner, Karwoski remains active in many civic organizations and spends considerable time working with state and federal elected officials. When considering his community involvement prior to elected office, Karwoski has spent more than 30 years in civic



Commissioner Stan Karwoski, District 2, Chair

engagement. To learn more about Chair Karwoski's background and duties, visit WashingtonCountyMN.gov/Karwoski.

Bigham, elected in 2022, is in her second tenure on the Washington County Board after serving previously from



Commissioner Karla Bigham, District 4, Vice Chair

2015 to 2018. In addition to her county level experience, she served in the Minnesota State Senate for five years, in the Minnesota House of Representatives for five years, and on the Cottage Grove City Council from 2005 until 2007. Prior to the city council, she chaired the Cottage Grove Public Safety, Health, and Welfare Commission. Bigham was chair of the Cottage Grove Charter Commission and was a member of the Cottage Grove Environmental Commission. To learn more about Vice Chair Bigham's background and duties, visit WashingtonCountyMN.gov/Bigham.

Bethany Cox sworn in as District 3 County Commissioner



Commissioner Bethany Cox

The residents of Washington County District 3 have a new representative on the County Board.

Bethany Cox was sworn in Jan. 7 to a four-year term as County Commissioner for District 3, serving the cities of Afton, Bayport, Baytown Township, Lake Elmo, Lake St. Croix Beach, Lakeland, Lakeland Shores, Oak Park Heights, St.

Mary's Point, Stillwater, Stillwater Township, and West Lakeland Township.

Commissioner Cox replaced Gary Kriesel, who retired from

the County Board after serving for 20 years.

Before being elected to the County Board, Commissioner Cox worked as the Director of Development at the Wild Rivers Conservancy of the St. Croix and Namekagon from 2019 to 2024. She served on the City of Stillwater Planning Commission from 2022 to 2024 and the Stillwater Public Library Board of Trustees from 2018 to 2022.

Cox grew up in Wisconsin and studied Exercise Physiology and Nutrition at Colorado State University. She then attended Logan College in St. Louis, Missouri, where she graduated as a Doctor of Chiropractic. She is a member of the Stillwater Sunrise Rotary Club.

To learn more about Commissioner Cox's background and duties, visit WashingtonCountyMN.gov/Cox.

**YOUR CAREER
AWAITS AT**

**Washington
County**



Metro Gold Line BRT *(continued from page 1)*

- Pre-boarding fare payment for faster stops.
- Access to Park & Ride lots in St. Paul, Oakdale, and Woodbury.
- Real-time arrival and departure information.
- Heated shelters, lighting, and security features.

“The opening of the METRO Gold Line is a big milestone for Washington County,” said Commissioner Stan Karwoski, District 2. “The Gold Line is another option that will make it easier than ever for people to get where they need to go — whether it’s housing, jobs, transit

connections, or key spots along the I-94 corridor, like the new Central Service and License Center in Woodbury.”

The 10-mile bus rapid transit line will connect St. Paul, Maplewood, Landfall, Oakdale, and Woodbury generally along I-94. An extension of the Gold Line to downtown Minneapolis is expected in 2027.

For information on the Gold Line, Metro micro, and other transportation options, visit GoWashingtonMN.com or call 651-430-6651.

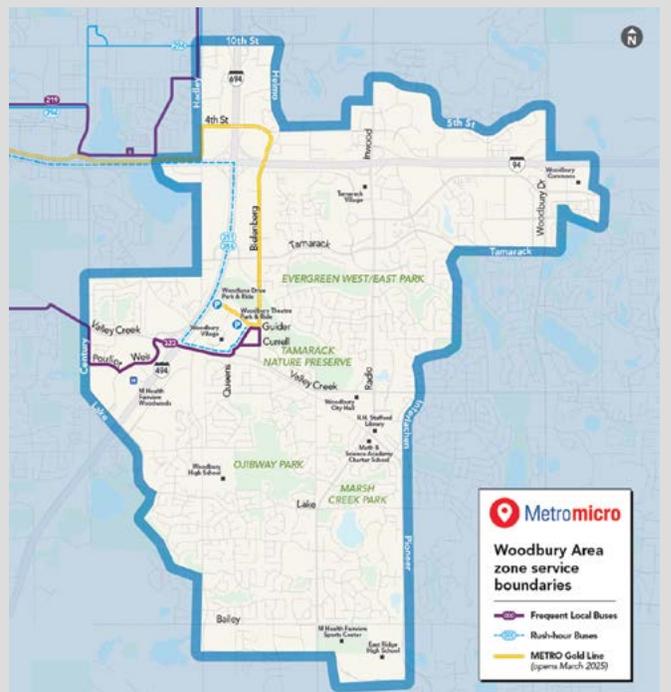


Metro micro launches in Woodbury and Oakdale *A bus that comes to you!*

Metro micro launched Jan. 6 bringing convenient, on-demand transit to portions of Woodbury and Oakdale. This affordable, curb-to-curb service offers shared rides within 20 minutes, similar to ride-hailing apps but with public transit fares. Riders can book through the Metro micro app or by calling 651-602-1170, making it easy to connect with existing transit routes, including the upcoming METRO Gold Line, launching on March 22, 2025. For more information, visit www.MetroTransit.org/Micro-Woodbury.



<https://apps.apple.com/us/app/metro-micro/id6738665391>



<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.sparelabs.platform.rider.metromicro>

Community members name two county snowplows

Washington County recently conducted its second “Name a Snowplow” contest and received more than 1,200 name ideas submitted by the public.

The list was narrowed to 10 finalists, including SKOL Plow, Snowby Keith, Stone Cold Steve Frostin’, De-Ice Ice Baby, Mr. Clean, Land of 10,000 Flakes, Sir Plows a Lot, Just Scrapin’ By, Snow Problem, and Hotdish Hauler.

More than 2,400 people voted to help name the two plows. Sir Plows a Lot was the top vote-getter at 680 votes with Land of 10,000 Flakes coming in a close second with 677 votes.

Sir Plows a Lot can be mostly seen in the northern half of the county, whereas Land of 10,000 Flakes will be located in the southern part of the county.



North Environmental Center opens in Forest Lake



Ribbon cutting ceremony at the North Environmental Center Dec. 16, 2024.

In December, the North Environmental Center opened in Forest Lake, offering residents a second location to drop off items that don't belong in the trash, such as household chemicals, batteries, electronics, recyclables, food scraps, and more.

Washington County has provided household hazardous waste collection services since 1995, including operation of a South Environmental Center in Woodbury since 2009. The North Environmental Center expands access by ensuring all Washington County residents are within 25 minutes of an Environmental Center.

"This new county facility is a great step forward in managing our waste in the most responsible, environmentally conscious way," said Commissioner Fran Miron, District 1. "Now, residents in the northern part of the county have a convenient, close-to-home option for safely disposing of materials that don't belong in regular trash."

Items accepted at the North Environmental Center include hazardous materials, electronics, household sharps, recyclables, and food scraps. The site features a Free Product Room, where residents can find usable products, such as latex paint, household cleaners, automotive fluids, and lawn/garden products. The North Yard Waste Site, formerly located in Hugo, has been permanently relocated to the North Environmental Center campus, providing a free drop-off option for leaves, grass clippings, brush, and other yard waste.

The North Environmental Center is expected to serve over 40,000 customers in the first year of operation, with an anticipated collection of 600,000 pounds of electronic waste and 750,000 pounds of hazardous waste. The North Environmental Center is open to residents of Washington, Anoka, Carver, Chisago, Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey, and Scott counties. The North Yard Waste Site is open to residents of Washington and Ramsey counties only.

North Environmental Center

6065 Headwaters Parkway, Forest Lake, MN 55025

Hours

Monday: 11 a.m.-7 p.m.

Wednesday: 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

Friday: 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

Saturday: 8 a.m.-2 p.m.



Learn more: WashCoRecycles.com/EnviroCenter

651-275-7475

EnvironmentalCenter@co.washington.mn.us

Digital evidence system improves case prosecution efficiency

A new digital evidence system adopted in 2024 is helping the Washington County Attorney's Office handle cases more efficiently.

With the increasing amount of digital evidence like videos, audio recordings, and data from phones, the county needed a better way to manage it all. Last year, the Attorney's Office started using Axon's Justice Premier, a software system that securely stores and manages digital evidence.

The system integrates with Axon's Evidence.com, another software system used by some local law enforcement

agencies, making it easier to share evidence. Importantly, the system also helps prepare electronic exhibits for court, ensuring the county follows the latest Minnesota Supreme Court rules.

Typical cases involve various types of evidence, such as police body camera footage, phone videos, and other electronic files that need organizing. Before this system, staff spent hours

uploading and downloading evidence to share with defense teams. Now, it takes only a fraction of the time, saving hours of work.

This upgrade not only makes work easier for county staff but also helps the legal process run more smoothly, which in turn can lead to faster case resolutions benefiting the entire community.

Learn more about the Washington County Attorney's Office by visiting WashingtonCountyMN.gov/CountyAttorney. Contact staff by calling 651-430-6115 or emailing WCA@co.washington.mn.us.

Battery Recycling 101

If it lights up, makes noise, or turns on without being plugged in, it has a battery. Batteries make our lives more convenient, but they must be disposed of properly.

Do not put batteries of any kind into the trash or recycling.

Batteries can catch fire and pose a threat to people and property. Some batteries also contain toxic metals, such as cadmium, lead, or mercury.

All batteries can be dropped off at a Washington County Environmental Center for free recycling.

“With electronics being such a big part of our daily lives, it’s more important than ever to recycle e-waste like batteries the right way,” said Commissioner Karla Bigham, District 4. “By dropping off your used batteries at the county’s Environmental Centers, you’re helping protect the environment and keeping everyone safer.”



Batteries accepted at Washington County Environmental Centers

- Rechargeable batteries like Lithium Ion (Li-ion), Nickel

Cadmium (Ni-Cd), and Nickel Metal Hydride (Ni-MH) batteries can be found in power tools, cellphones, laptops, toys, and more.

- Single-use batteries, such as button batteries and alkaline batteries, are commonly found in remote controls, watches, vape pens, toys, and many other household items. While alkaline batteries can be thrown away, it is best to bring them to an Environmental Center to be recycled.

If you cannot safely remove a battery, bring the entire device to a Washington County Environmental Center.

Electric vehicle (EV) and other high-watt batteries like those in scooters or e-bikes should be returned to the dealership or bike shop from where they were purchased. Manufacturers have programs in place to recycle these batteries responsibly.

Learn more at WashCoRecycles.com/Batteries.
Contact staff at 651-275-7475 or
EnvironmentalCenter@co.washington.mn.us.

County breaks ground on Emergency Housing Services Building

Washington County and the Washington County Community Development Agency (CDA) broke ground on the Emergency Housing Services Building (EHSB) Nov. 12.

This \$12 million project, located at the south end of the county’s Government Center campus in Stillwater, will be the county’s first permanent emergency housing for adults experiencing homelessness.

On average, 166 people in the county are homeless at any time, and about 54 of them need to find shelter in neighboring counties each year. Since February 2022, the county’s interim emergency housing program has helped 178 people, with 40% of them being 55 years old or older.

When finished, the two-story, 30,000-square-foot EHSB will have 30 private living units, a commercial kitchen, a dining area, storage, and parking.

The facility will not only offer a safe place to stay but also professional support services to help residents move toward stable housing. Staff will be available around the clock to assist residents with various needs, such as job connections, social services, transportation help, and health support.

Residents will be referred by the county’s Homeless Outreach Services Team and must meet certain criteria, including being over 18 years old, passing a background check, not actively using substances, and participating in a housing plan. They must also be physically present and unsheltered in Washington



County Commissioners break ground on November 12, 2024.

County. The average stay is about 90 days, and residents can stay with a partner and have a pet, following program guidelines.

“The Emergency Housing Services Building will be a lifeline for people experiencing homelessness, offering them the support, resources, and dignity they deserve,” said Commissioner Michelle Clasen, District 5. “I’m honored to be part of the County Board as we make this vital service available to those in need.”

Washington County CDA is managing the construction, which is expected to be completed by the end of 2025.

For more information and updates, visit WashingtonCountyMN.gov/EHSB or contact EmergencyHousing@co.washingtoncountymn.gov.

Extended Access service available at Valley Library

Washington County Library now offers Extended Access services at Valley Library in Lakeland.

With Extended Access, library cardholders can register to use the library independently outside of regular staffed hours.

After registration is complete, users can visit Valley Library anytime between 6 a.m. and 10 p.m. to:

- Pick up holds.
- Browse and check out other materials.
- Use public computers, printers, and copiers.
- Access meeting rooms.
- Use the library to work, study, or visit with others.

Extended Access is available every day, including weekends and holidays when the library would otherwise be closed.

“Libraries are where our community comes together to learn, explore, and connect,” said Commissioner Bethany Cox, District 3. “The Extended Access program is an exciting way the county is making Valley Library even more accessible for everyone, giving people more flexibility to use the library when it works best for them.”

Piloting the service

The library completed a pilot of Extended Access in fall of 2024.

Valley Library was chosen because it is the library branch with the fewest staffed hours in Washington County. With Extended Access, library availability will increase from 24 hours per week to 112 hours per week. New technology and space improvements for the pilot were made possible thanks to funding from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA).

Extended Access received positive

feedback from participants. One community member noted that they were grateful for the new service: “[It’s] life changing. I love having access to a quiet, clean space every day.”

Due to the pilot’s success, Washington County is reviewing how Extended Access could be implemented at other library locations in the future.

Sign up for Extended Access

To participate in Extended Access, you must have a valid Washington County Library card. You can apply for a card at WashCoLib.org or visit a library branch in person.

To join Extended Access, you must complete an application form and a short orientation online. Learn more and sign up for Extended Access at: WashCoLib.org/ExtendedAccess.

County Board adopts 2025 legislative priorities

The Washington County Board of Commissioners set their 2025 legislative priorities on Jan. 7 and shared them with local lawmakers.

Each year, the County Board outlines key issues and funding requests that are important to Washington County. For 2025, they are asking the Legislature for:

- \$22.5 million to build the County Road 19A and 100th Street Realignment Project.
- \$3 million to design the multimodal Trunk Highway (TH) 36 and Century Avenue (TH 120) grade separation project.
- \$10 million for the design and construction of a Southern Public Works and Environmental Center Campus.
- \$3 million to build a trailhead and trail connection from County Highway 5 to the Brown’s Creek State Trail.
- \$1 million to acquire land, design, and build a section of the Hardwood Creek Regional Trail.
- \$2 million for trail lighting at Cottage Grove Ravine Regional Park.

- \$4 million for land and equipment to process wood waste and diseased trees.
- \$20 million for capital projects in the Metropolitan Regional Park System.
- Support for upgrades to the ARMER Radio System, which is the primary two-way public safety radio system in Minnesota.
- Legislation to simplify the MnCHOICES assessment process, which is used by counties to determine support and service eligibility for people with long-term or chronic care needs, and to reduce reassessment frequency to every three years or when significant changes occur.
- Legislation to remove the 10% cost counties currently cover for MnCHOICES assessments.

For more details on the county’s legislative priorities or specific projects, visit WashingtonCountyMN.gov/LegislativePriorities.

Washington County Board commissioners



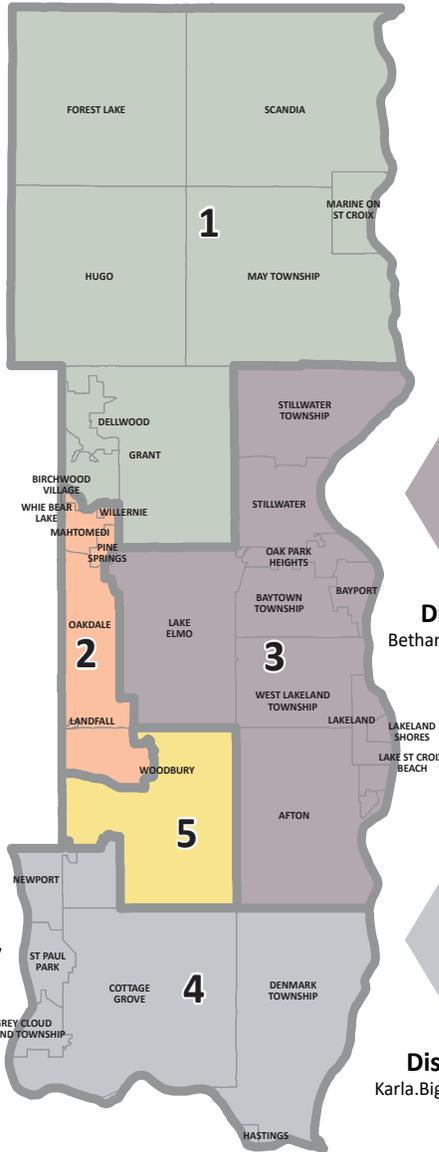
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District 2 - Stan Karwoski
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District 5 - Michelle Clasen
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Washington County Board of Commissioners

Washington County commissioners develop policy and make decisions that govern the county. For information, visit WashingtonCountyMN.gov or call 651-430-6000 (Teletypewriter (TTY): 651-430-6246).

County Board Meetings

The County Board generally meets most Tuesdays at 9 a.m. in the Government Center, 14949 N. 62nd St., Stillwater. Meeting information is online, or call the Office of Administration at 651-430-6001.

Livestreaming and cablecasting

Board meetings are livestreamed, at WashingtonCountyMN.gov/Livestream, where they are also archived. Board meetings may also be cablecast in some areas.



WE'RE HIRING!

Summer SEASONAL POSITIONS

Green trees, green grass, and green in your pocket — apply today for a seasonal summer job in Washington County Parks!

- Lifeguard • \$17.01-\$19.62 (\$300 hiring incentive available)
- Beach Coordinator • \$20.28-\$21.84
- Outdoor Recreation Instructor • \$17.01-18.31
- Guest Services Attendant • \$16.36-\$17.62
- Maintenance Assistant • \$17.01-\$18.31
- Natural Resources Technician • \$20.28-\$21.84

APPLY TODAY



www.GovernmentJobs.com/Careers/WashingtonMN

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02/28/2025/127,566

Spring Parks Events and Programs



Parks Photo Contest
Submissions due Oct. 6
Enter your photos
from a county

park for a chance to win a free
annual parks permit. Learn more
at [WashingtonCountyMN.gov/
PhotoContest](http://WashingtonCountyMN.gov/PhotoContest)

Free Tuesday

March 4, April 1, and May 6, all day
at county parks. Take advantage of
all that Washington County Parks
have to offer with free entry on the
first Tuesday of the months in 2025.

Bird Hike

March 8, 9-10:30 a.m., Big Marine
Park Reserve. Free with vehicle
permit.

Tea Talks: 2023-2024 Historic Courthouse Preservation Project

March 14, 5-6 p.m., Historic
Courthouse. Register at
[WashingtonCountyMN.gov/
ParksPrograms](http://WashingtonCountyMN.gov/ParksPrograms).

Spring Equinox Forest Bathing

March 22, 9-11 a.m., Cottage
Grove Ravine Regional Park.
\$45 per person. Register at
[WashingtonCountyMN.gov/
ParksPrograms](http://WashingtonCountyMN.gov/ParksPrograms).

Picturing the Past Collaborative History Photo Mural Unveiling

April 1, 2 p.m.,
Historic Courthouse

Bird Hike

April 12, 9-10:30 a.m., St. Croix Bluffs
Regional Park. Free with vehicle permit.

Spring Maker's Market

April 12, 10 a.m.-3 p.m., Cottage
Grove Ravine Regional Park. Free
with vehicle permit.

Escape Room in the Historic Courthouse Jail

April 19, 5-6 p.m., 6:30-7:30 p.m.,
and 8-9 p.m., Historic Courthouse,
\$15 per person (five person per
session). Reserve your session

at [WashingtonCountyMN.gov/
ParksPrograms](http://WashingtonCountyMN.gov/ParksPrograms).

Earth Day

April 22
Take advantage of all that
Washington County Parks have to
offer with free entry for Earth Day.

Earth Day/Arbor Day Celebration Forest Bathing

April 25, 6-8 p.m., Lake Elmo Park
Reserve, \$45 per person. Register
at [WashingtonCountyMN.gov/
ParksPrograms](http://WashingtonCountyMN.gov/ParksPrograms).

Law Day Judicial Exhibit Opening

May 1, Historic Courthouse.

Escape Room in the Historic Courthouse Jail

May 17, 5-6 p.m., 6:30-7:30 p.m.,
and 8-9 p.m., Historic Courthouse,
\$15 per person (five person per
session). Reserve your session
at [WashingtonCountyMN.gov/
ParksPrograms](http://WashingtonCountyMN.gov/ParksPrograms).



A vehicle permit (\$7/daily or \$30/annually) is required for entry to all Washington County parks except the Historic Courthouse. Learn more about upcoming Parks events by scanning the QR code, visiting WashingtonCountyMN.gov/Programs or contact staff at parks@co.washington.mn.us or 651-430-4300.