



2026 State Legislative Priorities

LACEY CITY COUNCIL

Andy Ryder, Mayor
Malcolm Miller, Deputy Mayor
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Adopted by Lacey City Council on December 2, 2026

1 THURSTON COUNTY REGIONAL BASIC LAW ENFORCEMENT ACADEMIES (BLEA) AT THE LACEY REGIONAL TRAINING CENTER



Police departments across Washington state continue to face significant staffing shortages. As communities grow and more law enforcement personnel retire, the state's Basic Law Enforcement Academy (BLEA) must receive adequate funding to provide training opportunities for new hires. Regional academies help reduce academy wait times and officer vacancy rates, and enhance local officer recruitment efforts. They also improve equity in training by enabling greater participation from local community members, eliminating the need for extended time away from home. In addition, establishing a regional BLEA in Lacey would be an effective use of limited public dollars, as we will have a new, purpose-built training center in early 2026. This would expedite an academy start date. Lacey is ideally located to serve five contiguous counties throughout the South Sound region. **We request an annual allocation of \$1,000,000 for the**

Criminal Justice Training Center (CJTC) to operate a regional BLEA academy at the Lacey Training Facility for five years. After five years, CJTC could reevaluate the impact of regional facilities and the status of potential upgrades to the main CJTC campus.

2 AUTHORIZE SUSTAINABLE ANIMAL CONTROL AND SHELTERING FUNDING MECHANISM

We request the creation of a dedicated funding mechanism to support animal control and sheltering. This funding would help support the ongoing operations and capital planning for Joint Animal Services (JAS). JAS established in 1977, is operated by the cities of Lacey, Olympia, Tumwater, and Thurston County. JAS has an 8,000 sq. ft. facility that serves as the community's primary shelter for animal rescues and homeless pets. The agency serves almost 304,000 residents in 774 square miles of urban and rural terrain.



3 ANNEXATION SALES AND USE TAX CREDIT EXTENSION

We appreciate the inclusion of the sales and use tax credit in HB 1425 (2024), which provides critical support for cities undertaking annexations. To ensure cities and counties have sufficient time to thoughtfully and collaboratively evaluate and implement these complex processes, **we respectfully request extending the sunset date from July 1, 2028, to July 1, 2038.** Based on the 2023-2024 state annexation data, no jurisdictions have met the threshold to use this tax credit, demonstrating the need for additional time to support implementation.



View Online:

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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4 DEVELOP LONG-TERM FUNDING SOLUTIONS FOR RIGHT OF WAY INITIATIVE-FUNDED PROGRAMS

We appreciate the state's continued leadership in responding to the homeless crisis, including funding for Maple Court. **We strongly urge the establishment of a sustainable, long-term funding mechanism for existing Right-of-Way Initiative-funded programs, rather than relying on the instability of short-term funding.**



5 LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT GRANT PROGRAM UPDATE

We urge amending the Local Law Enforcement Grant Program to prioritize funding for WASPC-accredited agencies. Accreditation requires departments to meet established best practices in policing — covering everything from use-of-force policies to officer training, improving operational efficiencies, reducing risk and liability, and increasing community engagement. It also affirms that a department operates with transparency, accountability, and commitment to continuous improvement. Providing prioritization for accredited agencies would incentivize accreditation, improving public safety in the state. **We also recommend the grant funding period extend 36 months from the date an entity receives grant funding to maximize the benefits of increased public safety impacts.**

6 TRANSPORTATION BENEFIT DISTRICT – REMOVAL OF ONGOING VOTER APPROVAL REQUIREMENT



We, like other local jurisdictions across Washington, rely on Transportation Benefit Districts (TBDs) to fund critical transportation infrastructure and maintenance. TBDs enable cities to address aging infrastructure and growing transportation demands with dedicated, locally controlled funding sources. **We respectfully request the TBD statutes be amended to remove recurring voter approval requirements and to make extensions council-manic.** This change would bring TBD revenue tools into better alignment with other local sales tax authorities, such as those for public safety, which do not require repeated voter reauthorization. It would also reduce administrative

burdens, election costs, and the risk of service disruption caused by funding uncertainty. Transportation improvements are long-term investments that demand stable, predictable funding streams. Gas tax revenue — the only dedicated funding source for transportation — has steadily declined for years, highlighting the urgent need to identify more stable and sustainable funding alternatives.

7 PUBLIC DEFENSE STANDARDS IMPACT

We are highly concerned about the impacts of the caseload limits adopted by the Washington State Supreme Court, which will reduce the number of unweighted misdemeanor cases from 400 to 120 over the next 10 years. We recognize and support the intent behind the new public defense caseload standards — to ensure quality legal representation and uphold constitutional rights. However, implementing these standards will have significant financial impacts at the local level. For the City, we estimate the changes will result in an increased annual cost of approximately \$100,000, adding up to over \$1 million in new yearly expenses by 2036. Over the ten-year implementation, the City estimates an increase of over \$4 million in total new expenses. These added costs stem primarily from the need to hire additional public defenders and support staff to comply with the lower caseload limits, as well as potential infrastructure and administrative adjustments. **We urge the Legislature and relevant agencies to recognize the funding gap created at the local level and to partner with cities to ensure this mandate is adequately and sustainably funded.** Without meaningful financial support, local jurisdictions will struggle to maintain current service levels across other essential programs while meeting the new public defense requirements. In addition, as implementation of these standards progress, we urge the state to re-evaluate its funding formula to ensure that cities receive a fair and adequate share of public defense resources.

WE ALSO SUPPORT THE TOP LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES OF:

Association of Washington Cities | LOTT Clean Water Alliance
Regional Housing Council | South Sound Military & Communities Partnership
Thurston County Shared Legislative Agenda | Thurston Regional Planning Council
Washington Recreation & Park Association

