

# **Snohomish County 2025 Legislative Agenda**

## **New County Revenue – Lift the 1% Property Tax Cap**

Due to factors such as inflation and population growth, the cost of providing maintenance-level services has outpaced revenue growth in all counties, including Snohomish County. These pressures on county revenues are exacerbated by additional demands and requirements for new services as directed by the state. While these gaps have been temporarily filled with one-time federal dollars and reserves, Snohomish County is facing an ongoing revenue crisis: current revenue streams are not generating sufficient revenue to fund maintenance level-services, and local revenue options cannot fully backfill remaining costs.

The state must provide counties with additional tools to address these revenue shortfalls. Snohomish County asks the Legislature to replace the 1% annual cap on property tax growth with a cap that follows inflation and population growth. Additionally, Snohomish County will seek opportunities to support legislation providing counties additional revenue tools.

## **Allow Working Farms to Retain Open Space Tax Status**

Snohomish County boasts a vibrant agricultural community that plays a critical role in maintaining food security and bolstering the local economy. As the agriculture industry modernizes, many of the county's working farms are diversifying their businesses to include agritourism elements, such as corn mazes, u-pick, food trucks, or event venues. Though agritourism remains secondary to agriculture or livestock production, lack of statutory clarity has placed many farms in Snohomish County at risk of losing their "farm and agricultural land" status under the Open Spaces Taxation Act, which values agricultural lands at their current use, rather than their highest and best use. This tax status allows these small, local farms to operate within urban and dense environments, like Snohomish County. Snohomish County supports legislation clarifying that working farms secondarily engaged in agritourism activities may retain their farm and agricultural land status.

## **Indigent Defense/Caseload Standards**

Counties are responsible for indigent defense as an agent of the state; however, despite being a state-mandated function, the state funds only 3% of public defense costs. Workforce and training shortages have placed additional pressure on the system, which is already underfunded. Before the Supreme Court considers adopting revisions to statewide caseload standards, the Legislature must fund a workgroup to study the full cost of adopting these standards statewide, including staffing and other resources necessary to ensure our justice system can meet more robust standards. Counties do not have the financial means to fund these changes. If enacted as proposed, Snohomish County would be required to shift funding away from other areas of county responsibility or even other areas of the justice system, like the Sheriff's Office, Prosecuting Attorney's Office, and courts, due to our financial constraints.

## **Behavioral Health**

Snohomish County asks the Legislature to advance budget and policy opportunities to support functional and accessible community behavioral health and crisis response systems, including addressing barriers that inhibit access, increasing reimbursement rates to support a robust workforce, securing funding to ensure adequate facilities, and other investment opportunities that advance behavioral health & crisis response services. Specifically, the county will look for opportunities to fund construction and/or operation of a behavioral health facility to fill system gaps, such as a Secure Withdrawal Management and Stabilization (SWMS) facility.

## **Budget Requests**

### *Snohomish River Trail – Transportation Budget Request*

Snohomish County requests \$25 million in the Transportation Budget to complete the Snohomish River Trail, a multimodal connector between the cities of Everett and Snohomish. The Snohomish River Trail will connect two regional trails, the Interurban Trail and Centennial Trail, providing both north-south and east-west connectivity for non-motorized traffic.

### *Chinook Marsh – Floodplains by Design – Capital Budget Request*

Snohomish County has been engaged in multi-year restoration efforts in the Snohomish River Estuary to improve fish habitat and restore the natural floodplain. Chinook Marsh is the next stage of this effort: this multi-phase project involves relocation of the City of Everett's main waterline paired with other habitat improvements to open up to 430 acres to their natural floodplain. The project was ranked #2 on the 2025-27 Floodplains by Design competitive grant program. Snohomish County requests funding for this program up to at least \$21 million, which will fund the county's portion of the project.

### *Sustainable Aviation Fuels (SAF) Center – Capital and Operating Budget Package*

Snohomish County requests \$35 million for the next phase of establishing Paine Field's Sustainable Aviation Fuels (SAF) Center. Funding will support a package of initial investments necessary to operate and construct the Center, including launching the Cascadia International SAF Institute, essential to fostering outside partnerships and investment, and funding to construct the Cascadia Sustainable Aviation Fuels Qualification Center and Repository (CSQC). Other investments include air quality monitoring, launching a book and claim tool, and an economic analysis to determine region-wide value of SAF production.

### **Support Snohomish County Regional Transportation Priorities List**

Snohomish County supports efforts to pass a transportation revenue package and full funding of the 2025 Regional Transportation Priorities list.