



# COUNTY OF ANOKA

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Finding Opportunities in Challenging Times**

The Anoka County Board of Commissioners is proposing a 2010 budget of \$257.8 million, a decrease of nearly 4.4% from the 2009 adopted budget. The resulting county property tax levy will be \$122.17 million, a reduction of \$406 thousand from the proposed levy adopted in September.

The process of preparing the 2010 budget began more than a year ago, when Board Chair Dennis Berg directed departments to begin identifying areas where cuts could be made, while keeping core services intact. More than \$4 million worth of cuts were identified and adopted by the Board of Commissioners for 2009, to offset \$3.6 million in reduced state aid due to unallotment. There were several challenges in the process of streamlining services for 2010, including the addition of operating costs for the new Public Safety Center, the likelihood that an additional \$3.2 million in state aid will be unallotted, and a new state mandate requiring metro counties to bear the cost of medical transportation services.

Some departments, such as the medical examiner, libraries, and license centers, have reduced hours, but continue to provide service. The sagging economy, combined with the unallotment of state aid, has increased pressure on staff. However, leaving vacant positions open longer has helped minimize the number of layoffs. The number of full time employees (FTE) at

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## **Finding Opportunities in Challenging Times – Add 1**

Anoka County in 2010 will be nearly identical to the number of FTEs in 2001, although the County's population has grown by more than 10% in that same time frame according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

“I have been energized by this entire process and the opportunity it has presented to reshape county government and focus on our core responsibilities,” said Board Chair Dennis Berg. “The lagging economy has caused contractors and vendors to roll back prices, which, coupled with the County's AAA credit rating from Standard & Poor's, has provided us with tremendous opportunities for savings on some of our biggest projects, including technology upgrades at our libraries and road projects.”

2010 will be a big year for rehabilitation of existing roadways, with more than \$5 million targeted for the annual overlay program and \$450,000 for bridge maintenance, crack sealing, signal painting, and rail crossing repairs. With the assistance of federal stimulus monies, projects that were delayed in 2009 will be built in 2010, including upgrading the bridge and interchange at Main Street (CSAH 14) and I-35E in Lino Lakes. This project includes safety, as well as capacity improvements for the entire interchange and ramps.

The Anoka County Regional Railroad Authority levy decreased by nearly 10% and Northstar, the state's first commuter rail line, began operation November 16, 2009. Combining the county and rail levy, and assuming a market value decrease of 7.8%, an Anoka County home, now valued at \$209,300, down from \$227,010 last year, will experience a property tax increase of 1.53%, or less than one dollar per month.

On average, residential home values in Anoka County decreased 7.8%. Commercial and industrial property values decreased an average of 3.2%.

In the midst of the recession, Anoka County has maintained its excellent Moody's rating and earned a AAA credit rating from Standard & Poor's. The AAA rating is given to less than 1% of rated entities.