

# Anoka County

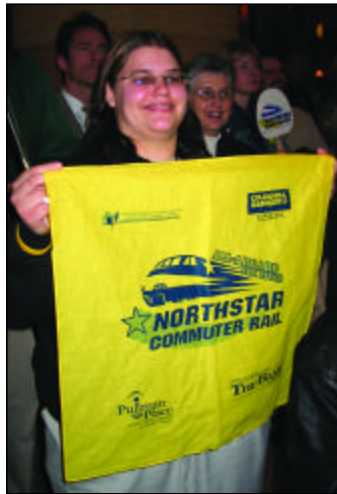
Spring 2005

News

## Northstar commuter rail picks up speed

For the first time ever, Northstar Commuter Rail funding was included in bonding bills passed by the Minnesota House and Senate in the 2005 legislative session.

"That's a major vote of confidence for the project," said Anoka County Commissioner Dan Erhart, chair of the Anoka County Regional Rail Authority. "Legislators responded to the repeated messages from residents and business people to do something about our transportation system. Northstar will be a tremendous tool for adding capacity to the transportation system in the north metro area," Erhart said.



Supporters rallied at the state capitol in February in support of Northstar commuter rail.

Governor by mid- to late March.

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) is interested in Northstar and has been working with the Northstar Corridor

Development Authority (NCDA) and the MN Dept. of Transportation to help advance the project. However, in a recent letter to Gov. Pawlenty, FTA Administrator Jennifer Dorn explained that the Northstar commuter rail project received a "Not Recommended" rating this year due to the failure of the state to provide the necessary funding.

Gov. Pawlenty sent a letter to state legislators

stating that "time is clearly of the essence" in approving state funding for Northstar in order to maintain a positive relationship with the FTA and access federal matching dollars. The NCDA is optimistic that once state funding is approved this year, Northstar can regain its "Recommended" rating and obtain federal backing, according to Erhart.



**"Northstar will be a tremendous tool for adding capacity to the transportation system in the north metro area."**

*Commissioner Dan Erhart*

A conference committee of Senate and House members began meeting in March to consolidate the two bonding bills. Support among the conferees for the \$37.5 million funding requested by Governor Pawlenty for Northstar is strong, Erhart said. It's possible that a final capital investment bill may be passed by the House and Senate and sent to the

Fifty percent of the project's total cost of an estimated \$265 million will be paid for with federal dollars. The NCDA's local financial commitments, totaling 33 percent of the non-federal share of the total project, are in place.

The final design phase will be completed within a year. In 2006, the Governor and

*"Northstar" continued on page 2*

## Anoka County finds new ways to provide services, help families

Two new Human Services programs in Anoka County are examples of how the county is finding new ways to provide services and help families in a more efficient and cost effective manner. One is Alternative Response, and the other is the Integrated Services Project.

### Alternative Response

Most parents love their children and want to do everything they can to keep them happy and safe. That's the core belief behind a new program called "Alternative Response" that aims to more effectively respond to cases of child abuse or neglect.

Under the Alternative Response program, child protection staff work in close partnership with parents to assess each family's needs and strengths. Rather than focusing solely on the details of a specific incident that may prove or disprove abuse or neglect, child protection staff address concerns in a non-confrontational manner.

"A mother who doesn't have access to child care, for example, may feel pressure to leave her young children home alone while she goes to work," said Anoka County Commissioner Rhonda Sivarajah, who chairs the county's Human Services Committee.

"With Alternative Response, a caseworker would assist the parent in finding child care and other community support to strengthen the family and keep children safe."



**"This holistic approach enables staff to support families and give them the resources they need to be better parents."**

*Commissioner Rhonda Sivarajah*

Alternative Response waives the traditional investigation and determination of maltreatment. Families and the county have the

choice of using Alternative Response or the more traditional investigative approach. (In reports of sexual abuse and those in which a child is in imminent danger of serious harm, the Alternative Response option is not offered.)

An analysis by the Minnesota Department of Human Services found that families who used Alternative Response were less likely to have additional child mistreatment reports. Anoka County was one of 20 counties in the state selected to pilot the Alternative

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## Joint Law Enforcement Council improving county law enforcement

by Anoka County Attorney Robert M.A. Johnson

Over 30 years ago, a group of government leaders led by then Anoka County Attorney Robert W. Johnson recognized the need to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of law enforcement in the county. They identified five objectives: to improve investigation, communications, training, records, and recruitment. As a means to meet those objectives, the Anoka County Joint Law Enforcement Council was created in 1970, and since that time has achieved or made progress toward all five objectives.

The Council secured a federal grant to develop a centralized investigation unit, centralized communications, and centralized training. Anoka County now provides funding for these units. The investigation unit evolved into the Criminal Investigation Division of the Sheriff's Office. Its policies are established by the

Council, working with Sheriff Bruce Andersohn. The county has benefited greatly by having a force of 15 investigators who can be deployed on a major crime or assist in specialized investigations.

Anoka County's Central Communications system has become the envy of many counties because of its efficient and effective operation. It too works under the policy direction of the Council and is administered by Anoka County. The Council was instrumental in implementing the new 800 MHz public safety radio system. The training component is now in the Sheriff's Office, but continues to work with the Council for policy direction.

The Council also created a joint records system linking all local police departments in the county. The system today is administered by Chief Steve Wells and Captain Steve Bluml in the Coon Rapids Police Department. Costs are

shared in proportion to each agency's calls for service.

The Joint Law Enforcement Council now consists of 25 members from law enforcement, city councils, and the county board, including Commissioners Jim Kordiak and Dennis Berg.

### "Northstar" continued from page 1

the Legislature will consider funding the balance of the state's commitment to Northstar, estimated at slightly over \$50 million.

### About Northstar Commuter Rail

The Northstar Corridor rail proposal is for service on the 40-mile segment of existing track along Highways 10 and 47 from Big Lake to Minneapolis. Stations are proposed for Big Lake, Elk River, Anoka, Coon Rapids, Fridley, and Minneapolis. For more information about the Northstar Corridor commuter rail project, please visit [www.mn-GetOnBoard.com](http://www.mn-GetOnBoard.com).

## Scott LeDoux is new District 5 commissioner

Scott LeDoux is the new commissioner for District 5 covering the eastern half of Coon Rapids and southern portion of Andover. LeDoux, who has lived in Andover for more than 32 years, replaces Dave McCauley.

LeDoux is most known for his professional boxing career, holding the record as the heavyweight contender to fight the most World Champions in his career, 11, including a bout resulting in a draw against Mohammed Ali. He still works on occasion as a boxing trainer and announcer on ESPN. A fighter being trained by LeDoux competed in the reality TV series "The Contender," which aired on network television beginning in March 2005.

LeDoux has also had an accomplished career in sales. He and his wife Carol are realtors, and LeDoux does inspirational



Anoka County Commissioner Scott LeDoux

speaking to corporate groups on various topics, including adapting to change in the workplace.

"I'm enjoying my service as a county commissioner," said LeDoux, who was sworn in January 3, 2005. "There's a lot to learn and a lot of meetings, but I've got the right temperament for dealing with issues and finding solutions,

so it's working out well."

LeDoux says that transportation is one of his primary concerns. "We have a transportation problem in Anoka County, as any driver living or trying to do business in the area can tell you," he said. "Northstar commuter rail is a big priority, as is improving Hwys. 10 and 65, Hanson and Bunker Lake Boulevards, and Hwy. 242. The need is great."

LeDoux was appointed by the board to serve on numerous committees. Most notably, he was appointed chair of the Public Safety Committee, where he works with the Sheriff's Office and other county managers directing crime prevention and safety initiatives.

Besides his county service, LeDoux also serves on the state Racing Commission, and is chair of the fundraising effort for the proposed new Andover YMCA.

## Victims offered immediate support and services



by Anoka County Sheriff Bruce Andersohn

The Anoka County Sheriff's Office recently hired a Victim Services Coordinator, making it one of only two law enforcement agencies in the state

of Minnesota to offer direct services to crime victims. One of the goals of the Anoka County Sheriff's Office is to improve communication and support for victims, without regard for the type of crime or loss they've experienced. Victim services in law enforcement have long been overlooked, however it is a priority of the Anoka County Sheriff's Office to assist victims.

When the Anoka County Attorney's Office files charges against a suspect, staff is available to offer resources, help victims or witnesses through the process, and be a supportive guide. The county also has

strong advocate programs to assist victims of sexual assault and domestic abuse.

However, when there is no suspect, or when the criminal investigation is lengthy, or in situations where a non-criminal event has occurred, such as a fatal car accident, victims and their surviving family and friends have no such support. The Anoka County Sheriff's Office new Victim Services Coordinator, Maggie Tessendorf, will help fill that gap.

With funding from the MN Center for Crime Victim Services, Tessendorf began developing the new program by collecting information on area resources and agency referrals, and by looking for ways to collaborate with existing programs. She will make contact with a broad range of victims - surviving family members of fatal car accidents, suicides, and homicides; and victims of burglary,

identity theft, and other crimes. Through crisis work at the scene, phone contact, letters, and written resources, Tessendorf will offer services to members of the community who may otherwise have been isolated or uninformed of their options.

If you have questions about the program or concerns for the Victim Services Coordinator, please call Maggie Tessendorf at 763-323-5128 or email her at [Maggie.Tessendorf@co.anoka.mn.us](mailto:Maggie.Tessendorf@co.anoka.mn.us).

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# NEWS BRIEFS

- Prudent budgeting, strong annual growth, and major commercial and residential developments are key reasons Moody's Investors Services has reaffirmed Anoka County's strong Aa3 bond rating. The rating is a measure of the county's creditworthiness and determines what interest rate the county pays on borrowing to fund major projects.

- Help in filling out tax forms is available free for seniors and disabled adults at sites throughout Anoka County now until April 14, 2005. This service is provided by Anoka County RSVP and AARP volunteers who have received training and certification by the IRS and the Minnesota Department of Revenue. Call the Anoka County Tax Assistance Information Line at 763-422-6923 for more information.

- The Anoka County Veterans Services Office is serving an average of 75 new clients a month, up from 48 per month in 2003. A growing number of veterans are seeking help primarily for mental health concerns, according to Duane Krueger, Veterans Services director. For information, call 763-323-5290.

- Anoka County Commissioner Dennis Berg recently received the "Citizens Service Award" from the Minnesota County Engineers Association. This is a special award presented to an individual who has demonstrated tremendous dedication to the improvement of transportation and the overall quality of life in Minnesota. Berg was honored for his extraordinary commitment over the past decade to improving the county state aid highway system. He also was recognized for his efforts to keep government cost-effective and for being proactive when issues are under discussion at the federal and state level.

- Anoka County's Chomonix Golf Course is one of the most scenic courses in the entire metro area. It is a well-maintained, 18-hole, par 72 course with just the right level of difficulty for golfers of all abilities. Chomonix, located in the rolling hills of Rice Creek Chain of Lakes Regional Park Reserve in Lino Lakes, is open to the public. To make a tee



time, visit [www.chomonix.com](http://www.chomonix.com) or call 651-482-8484. Chomonix will open as weather permits.

- Chauncey Barrett Gardens II, a 31-unit senior apartment complex located at 7022 Centerville Road in Centerville, celebrated its grand opening in January. The complex was built by the Anoka County Housing and Redevelopment Authority in cooperation with the City of Centerville. For rental information, call 763-377-1800.

- Anoka County has established a Transportation Management Organization (TMO) to promote transportation alternatives for commuters who live or work in the county. Through education and outreach about transportation alternatives available to area businesses and residents, such as transit, van- and carpooling, the TMO aims to improve mobility and access, ease congestion, and reduce air pollution.



Anoka County Commissioner Dennis Berg, right, is congratulated by Carver County Engineer Roger Gustafson upon receiving the "Citizens Service Award" from the Minnesota County Engineers Association.

- Get ready for spring with help from the Anoka County Libraries. Tax forms and other personal finance resources are available as well as information on travel, sports, and gardening, among many topics. For more information visit [www.anoka.lib.mn.us](http://www.anoka.lib.mn.us) or call 763-717-3267.

- A statewide database developed by the Minnesota Department of Health, allows residents to obtain their birth certificate at any Anoka County License Center, even if they were born in another Minnesota county. All births after 1935 are in the database and counties have been entering older births as time allows. For additional information, forms, and License Center locations, visit [www.AnokaCounty.us](http://www.AnokaCounty.us) and click on "Licenses & Permits" or call 763-323-5777.

- Anoka County and the City of Blaine stand ready to move forward on plans for a possible new Vikings stadium development should the new team owner Reggie Fowler and the state Legislature be prepared to do the same. Fowler, whose



Artist rendering of the proposed Vikings stadium (at left) and surrounding development in Blaine.

ownership still needs to be approved by the National Football League's owners, has expressed a great deal of interest in the possibility of a stadium along with a larger retail, commercial, housing, and corporate development project at the proposed Blaine site.

- The Minnesota Racing Commission approved a harness racing track in Columbus Township. Located west of I-35 on Co. Rd. 23 (Lake Drive N.E.), the \$47 million facility is scheduled to open in 2006.

- Anoka County is home to one of the state's largest and most exciting outdoor water parks. Bunker Beach, located in Bunker Hills Regional Park in Coon Rapids, features a wave pool, adventure pool, waterslide, sand play area, and much more. It's a great place for the whole family to cool off on hot summer days. Bunker Beach is open June 4 through Labor Day. For more information, visit [www.bunkerbeach.com](http://www.bunkerbeach.com) or call 763-767-2895.



- Nearly \$4.5 million of Minnesota Housing Finance Agency (MHFA) funds were designated for use in Anoka County in 2004 for the First Time Homebuyer Program. Cities throughout the county participated. County staff received hundreds of phone calls about the program. Information was sent to nearly 896 interested persons, and the county had 25 loans funded through MHFA. Anoka County plans to participate in the program again this year.

## Home composting kits available through regional program

Reduce the amount of food waste in household garbage by using a special backyard composting kit, available now for \$30 through a cooperative program of Anoka County and the Solid Waste Management Coordinating Board. Nearly 12 percent of all garbage generated in the Twin Cities is food waste.

The 13-cubic foot "Garden Gourmet" compost bin has a top cover and two locking lids that

keep animals out. A sliding door at the bottom provides easy access to finished compost. The kit also includes a separate two-gallon covered kitchen waste bucket.



**"Already this program has provided 7,000 composting kits to Anoka County residents."**

**Commissioner Jim Kordiak**

provided 7,000 composting kits to Anoka County residents," said Anoka County Commissioner Jim Kordiak, who chairs the county's Waste Management and Energy Committee. "Composting is easy to do,

especially with this convenient kit, and the end result is a wonderful additive to the soil."

Residents may order their composting kit online at [www.GreenGuardian.com](http://www.GreenGuardian.com) or by calling 651-292-3933 during normal business hours. In addition, composting kits will be available for pick-up on Thursday, April 28, from 2 p.m. to 7 p.m. at the Columbia Arena, 7011 University Avenue N.E. in Fridley.

For more information, call Anoka County Integrated Waste Management at 763-323-5730 or visit [www.AnokaCounty.us/recycle](http://www.AnokaCounty.us/recycle).

# Margaret Langfeld elected Anoka County Board chair

Commissioner Margaret Langfeld, who represents District 3 (which includes Blaine, Spring Lake Park, and part of Fridley), was elected by the seven-member Anoka County Board of Commissioners to serve as chair. Every January the board elects a chair to serve for the year. Langfeld has served on the county board for 22 years.



Anoka County Board Chair Margaret Langfeld

The board chair presides at county board meetings, speaks on behalf of the board, has authority to sign documents on behalf of the county, makes committee appointments, represents the county on state-wide and metropolitan-area boards, and serves as lead commissioner on key projects.

At the board meeting in January when she was elected, Langfeld outlined some of her top priorities. She stated that Northstar commuter rail is the county's first, second, and third priority. "We have worked on accomplishing this for a number of years, and this could be the year it finally gets funded by the Minnesota Legislature," said Langfeld. "Transportation of all kinds is a major challenge and high priority for this county board."

Holding down property taxes, looking for innovative ways to deliver county services, and attracting strong businesses to the county in order to strengthen the tax base and provide quality jobs are other top priorities. "Anoka County is a great place to live, work, play, and do business," Langfeld said. "We need to continue to provide quality services in the most

efficient manner possible."

About property taxes Langfeld said, "Anoka County continues to have the lowest per-person county property taxes of all seven metropolitan counties and is one of the lowest of all 87 counties in the state. We intend to maintain that standard."

"As important as what we do, is how we do it," said Langfeld. "We are servants of the people, and as such, need to act with courtesy and respect for all people."

Langfeld also indicated that Anoka County is willing and eager to work with any business wanting to locate in the county that brings good jobs and expands the tax base, such as the Minnesota Vikings.

"The proposal to build a stadium would provide thousands of jobs, establish Anoka County as the sports tourism destination for the entire upper Midwest, and would strengthen the property tax base, allowing the county to continue its tradition of holding down taxes," said Langfeld.

## "Families" continued from page 1

Response program. Last year, Alternative Response was used to serve more than 300 families in Anoka County.

"With Alternative Response, county child protection caseworkers address child safety and maltreatment concerns but also are able to identify a family's strengths and needs," Sivarajah said. "This holistic approach enables staff to support families and give them the resources they need to be better parents."

**Integrated Services Project**  
Anoka County will receive nearly \$1.2 million over three years from the state Department of Human Services to work with families in the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) who have serious and multiple barriers that keep them from becoming economically self-sufficient.

The money will fund expansion of the county's Partnerships for Family Success program, a collaborative effort of the county's Income Maintenance, Corrections, Job Training Center,

**"This coordinated approach makes the best use of county resources and is able to help families in the most efficient manner possible."**

**Commissioner Dick Lang**



Community Health and Environmental Services, and Community Social Services and Mental Health Departments. The program started in June 2004 in an effort to improve outcomes for people who were using three or more services, including families in MFIP. The collaboration is working, according to

Anoka County Commissioner Dick Lang, vice chair of the county's Human Services Committee.

"Most of the people in MFIP are able to become economically self-sufficient in the five years allowed by state guidelines," Lang said. "However, some families have multiple challenges and for them, that's just not possible. This coordinated approach makes the best use of county resources and is able to help families most efficiently."

Before the Partnerships for Family Success program, a family could have a different case worker in each department that provided services. With the new approach, families are not shifted from one caseworker to another. Families form relationships and build trust in their caseworker. Additional benefits of the program are improved MFIP participation rates and the elimination of duplication by increasing coordination between departments.

## Anoka County Board of Commissioners



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