

DeSoto County Board of County Commissioners
201 East Oak Street, Suite 201
Arcadia, Florida 34266
863-993-4800

DeSoto County Designations:

- **Rural Area of Economic Opportunity**
- **Fiscally Constrained County**
- **Small County**

General Operating Millage: 7.9048

Law Enforcement Millage: 2.4399

State Legislative Priorities / 2025-2026:

Full Funding of Advalorem offsets for Fiscally Constrained Counties

Continue to fully fund the offset of the impacts of Amendment 1 and subsequent homestead exemption amendments. (2nd and 4th \$25,000 homestead exemptions)

Preservation of Home Rule Authority

Request for support of the preservation of Home Rule Authority, which enables the Board to govern at the local level to the service of its constituents. Home Rule Authority is a crucial element of the County's ability to be responsive and adaptive to local needs.

Unfunded Mandates

The County opposes State Legislation that mandates the delivery of costly services or processes absent the resources to fund them. We respectfully request active engagement with the affected entities in the legislative process to measure and consider the impacts of such mandates.

Meaningful Local Involvement

When faced with policy and legislative proposals that impact local government, we request meaningful local involvement to fully vet impacts, provide information that may be important to consider in decision making, and provide local level information it may need to consider. Information and communication are critical

in well-informed decisions that minimize unintended consequences. The County and State Governments may have different responsibilities, but we all serve the citizens of the state of Florida. We are partners in service, and we are willing and ready to engage collaboratively.

State Aid to Libraries:

Maintain State Aid to Libraries funding

Affordable Housing:

Maintain funding of Florida's affordable housing programs, specifically the SHIP program funding. Support utilizing the full amount of the established trust fund for its intended purposes.

Small County Road Programs (SCRAP/SCOP)

Support full funding the FDOT for the FY 2025-26 workplan project requests for SCRAP and SCOP projects.

Health Department Funding

Maintain funding for health departments providing primary health care and dental services and protect them from state budget reductions. Small County (State) Health Departments serve a critical role in community health in service to the medically underserved communities.

Legislative Project Requests

Wastewater Disposal

\$5,000,000

The State appropriated \$5,000,000 during the most recent Legislative Session, combined with this additional request, state assistance would represent approximately 70% of project costs to construct a deep injection well at an estimated costs of \$15,000,000. The effluent disposal solution is necessary because there is no additional spray field irrigation land area at, or near, the County's wastewater treatment facility. There is significant demand for wastewater capacity that is limited by effluent disposal. The balance of the project will be funded through capital charges, capital reserves, and the State Revolving Loan Fund managed by FDEP. Resolving the effluent disposal challenge will allow the County to move forward with treatment capacity expansion to serve the residential and commercial demand in a manner that does not encourage the installation of septic systems in dense housing developments and/or the construction of numerous private package plants throughout the County.

County Road 769 Expansion**\$5,000,000**

FDOT and the County are working together to fund approximately 2.2 miles, adding an additional 2 lanes, to the southern portion of CR 769 (Kings Highway). Design is underway and programmed at approx. 3.4 million. The County is in the process of negotiating stormwater property within the 1st mile of the project. We have broken the project into two phases based on funding feasibility. The request will be used for construction costs, construction management costs, utility relocation and/or right-of-way acquisition. The County and the FDOT have collectively identified about 15.5 Million in constructing funding in addition to the 3.4 million in design funding. All sources have been local and/or Federal. This project will provide design integration with the portion of Kings Highway that Charlotte County is doing and will provide relief to the heavy congestion of this portion of the roadway.

- CR 769 leads directly to I-75 and is the only local road designated as an Evacuation Route
- Priority Project of the Heartland Regional Transportation Organization
- Connects Interstate to State Road system (SR 72 and US 17/SR 35
- This segment of roadway is currently over capacity
- Strong State/Local partnership

Property Acquisition/Jail Replacement**\$250,000**

The County was awarded a state appropriation in state FY 2024-2025 in the amount of \$150,000 to commission a conceptual jail design to replace the current jail and Sheriff administrative complex, based on age, condition, and capacity. The County issued a Request for Proposals and selected Securitecure to perform the work. The contract amount was just under \$50,000. The project is complete, and it is concluded that the jail project would require a 12–14-acre site. Funding was administered by FDLE. Just over \$100,000 currently remains and was not utilized for the conceptual design. The County is requesting a reallocation of the balance for use to acquire suitable property, and an additional allocation of **\$150,000** for property acquisition.

DeSoto County Fire Tower Truck**\$1,000,000**

The County's current Fire Tower Engine has become unreliable and is often out of service. The truck has little to no resale value. The County has been allocating funding for capital purchases to replace rescue trucks and fire trucks in the budget process. The County does not have sufficient revenue to allocate funds to

replace the fire tower truck. Another entity donated a tower truck to the County; however, to bring the truck to current standards it will cost \$500,000. It does not make financial sense to invest 50% of the cost of a new Fire Tower Engine in a 30-year-old truck.

<u>Animal Services Adoption Building</u>	<u>\$175,000</u>
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Request for 50% cost share to construct a simple animal services adoption building to provide a safe area for adoptable pets to be housed outside of the main animal control building where dangerous dogs, quarantined animals, and sick animals are housed. The County allocated design funding last fiscal year. Design was complete and the building was scheduled to be constructed next fiscal year; the construction project was cut from the CIP, along with several other capital items in effort to balance the budget without increasing the millage rate.