

## Cost Reduction Efforts for Local Governments Highway Services

Reducing duplicative services and multiple layers of local government is an efficient and effective way of lowering the costs of local service delivery to property taxpayer costs. Through the Local Government Efficiency (LGE) Program, the Department of State has had the opportunity to invest in hundreds of locally-led initiatives. For highway services local officials have identified the following strategies, benefits and challenges. The sample projects listed below are past and current efforts that have been supported through the LGE program that may help others considering similar actions.

1. **Consolidation of Highway Departments:** Functional consolidation of highway departments or departments of public works.

- Eliminates duplicative operational and administrative costs.
- Election of highway superintendents precludes dissolution of town highway departments.

### **Project Example**

a. The Town of Chemung and Town of Ashland will consolidate the two highway departments into one, after the approval of a public referendum to make the Town of Ashland's highway superintendent position appointive. Early retirement incentives have been developed for two employees and Town of Chemung will fund those incentives.

2. **Countywide Provision of Highway Services:** County highway department performs services, such as snow plowing, formerly performed by individual municipalities.

- Less need for municipalities to keep specialized equipment.
- More efficient use of personnel and equipment.
- Need to determine which services should remain at the local level.

### **Project Example**

a. Otsego County installed an automated asset management system to inventory the condition of signage and traffic control structures all county owned highways. With over 1000 lane miles to monitor the project replaced inefficient methods with new cartographic and reflectometry equipment that will enable the County to better manage the asset.

3. **Shared Infrastructure and Facilities:** Municipalities share transportation infrastructure such as highway garages.

- Avoids duplicative capital expenditures.
- Municipalities retain independence.
- May be an initial step to full consolidation.

### **Project Examples**

a. Village of Deposit, Towns of Deposit and Sanford and the Deposit Central school district studied the feasibility of constructing a shared highway facility.

b. The Town of Newstead in Erie County built a new highway garage to service both the Town and the Village of Akron, replacing two deficient structures.

4. **Cooperative Agreements:** Municipalities agree to share resources, such as personnel and equipment, to provide or improve services.

- Avoids duplicative capital costs for highway equipment.
- Easy to implement; municipalities retain independence.

#### **Project Examples**

a. The Town of Clarkson in Monroe County purchased a vacuum street sweeper to share with the Towns of Hamlin, Parma and Sweden, saving approximately \$50,000 annually in rental and maintenance costs.

b. The cities of Port Jervis and Middletown in Orange County entered into an inter-municipal agreement for the joint acquisition and shared use of capital equipment. The equipment, a combination sewer jet/catch basin cleaner and trailer mounted camera/rover enables these communities to monitor, clean, repair and maintain their storm water and sanitary sewer systems.

5. **Contracting for Services:** Municipalities with excess capacity and lower costs contract with other municipalities to provide services.

- Allows municipalities to be relieved of operating and capital costs of providing services.
- Additional revenue stream for service provider.
- Contractor receives service at lower cost than if it provided the service itself.

#### **Project Examples**

a. The Town of Smithtown is constructing a regional fuel facility at its main highway yard for use by partner local governments. The expanded distribution capacity, fuel management system, and back-up power measures provide added resources for first responders and resiliency in a region subject to extreme weather related conditions.

6. **Regional Planning:** Multi-municipal or county-led collaboration for highway services to more efficiently manage personnel, equipment and other resources.

- Optimize capacity based upon population and need.
- Sharing equipment may reduce individual municipal capital costs.
- Ability to plan long-term for services more efficiently and effectively.

#### **Project Examples**

a. Chemung County and partner municipalities created a highway services board to determine the best ways to maximize service efficiencies. Recommendations called for consolidating certain services countywide, leaving certain other services with the rural towns/villages, and creating a consolidated urban service area to be managed by the county.

b. Hamilton County completed a shared fuel delivery program for all local governments in the county.

