



AB 6817: 2026 State Legislative Priorities Adoption

November 18, 2025



2026 Session Logistics

- The 2026 legislative session will be a “short session,” meaning a 60-day session rather than the “long” 105-day session that occurs in odd years.
- Short sessions do not include the adoption of a bi-annual budget, have a faster pace, focus on a smaller number of bills and mid-budget adjustments.
- While the exact dates of the session are not finalized, staff anticipate the session lasting from January 12, 2026 to March 12, 2026.



2026 Legislative Priorities

- The purpose of Council-approved legislative priorities is to allow the City to engage on issues with legislators directly, quickly, and efficiently.
- Provides high level goals of Mercer Island that allow staff and Council to widely engage with specific language of draft legislation.



2026 Legislative Priorities

The City's draft 2026 State Legislative Priorities are included as Exhibit 1 and the proposed priorities are categorized as follows:

- Support for Safe Use of E-Bikes and E-Motorcycles/E-Dirt Bikes
- Support for Public Safety
- Increase Resources for Behavioral Health and Substance Use Disorder Treatment and Prevention
- Support for Affordable Housing
- Balanced and Collaborative Approach to Wastewater Management
- Preserving and Protecting the Environment



Support for Safe Use of E-Bikes and E-Motorcycles/E-Dirt Bikes

- Add a definition for e-motorcycles/e-dirt bikes in state code.
- City staff and AWC already in discussion with key stakeholders and legislators on running a bill this session. There is strong momentum for this thanks to City leadership on this issue.
- Support for expanded State regulations to address the rising popularity of e-bikes and e-motorcycles/e-dirt bikes among youth to ensure safe use while promoting sustainable transportation



Support for Public Safety

- Create state funding for cities to adopt public safety technologies such as body worn cameras, automatic license plate readers, and evidence processing software systems.
- Increase state support and funding for indigent defense service/public defenders. Response to recent Washington State Supreme Court ruling.
- Review new funding tools created in HB 2015 to ensure that they are effective and accessible for communities of all sizes.



Increase Resources for Behavioral Health and Substance Use Disorder Treatment and Prevention

- Increasing prevention and intervention resources targeting opiates and other substances of abuse.
- Funding to expand community- and school-based mental health services for youth.
- Support continued and expanded operational grant funding, as well as dedicated ongoing operational funding for co-response, municipal therapeutic courts, community courts, and diversion programs.



Support for Affordable Housing

- Cities need new tools and incentives to meet the needs for affordable housing construction, operations, and preservation.
- Increase State investments and low-interest loans to strengthen local infrastructure such as sewer and water systems, which is essential for expanding affordable housing opportunities.
- Support continued partnership and investment with ARCH to build affordable housing throughout East King County. Oppose unilateral state measures that undermine local efforts to increase access to shelter and housing.
- Additional time from the state to implement recently adopted housing legislation before new requirements are added.



Balanced and Collaborative Approach to Wastewater Management

- Joining AWC in requesting the state balance affordability of utility rates with obligations to environmental stewardship in response to proposed Department of Ecology nutrient regulations on municipal wastewater systems.
- Related to the AWC letter City Council approved the Mayor signing on to at the last Council meeting (AB 6804).



Preserving and Protecting the Environment

- State policy and funding support to implement the City's adopted Climate Action Plan.
- Goals of the Climate Action Plan give City's legislative team and Council broad ability to engage with detailed and often complex bill language on climate and sustainability.



Preserving and Protecting the Environment

- Staff realized there was an error made in the Agenda Bill in the text of this section. Text was copied from an earlier version of this section from the 2025 legislative priorities that was later modified by Council.
- Staff recommends a motion to return to the final language used in the 2025 Legislative Priorities:

The City supports legislation, partnerships, and funding opportunities that advance the implementation of the City's adopted Climate Action Plan. This includes initiatives for clean energy, emissions reduction, electrification of public assets, and innovative practices that promote resilience and protect natural resources.



Partner Legislative Priorities

The City collaborates with other organizations when developing legislative asks. Staff included for reference the legislative priorities from the following partner agencies in the agenda material:

- Association of Washington Cities (AWC)
- A Regional Coalition for Housing (ARCH)



2026 Legislative Priorities

ARCH members are in need, ARCH is focusing on the following priorities:

1 ARCH at the local level

1A: Promote local resources
1B: Encourage local promotion

Cities and towns are home to 66% of Washington's residents, drive the state's economy, and provide the most accessible form of government. The success of our cities and towns depends on adequate resources and community-based decision-making to best meet the unique needs of our communities.

Washington's 281 cities and towns ask the Legislature to partner with us and act on the following priorities:

2 ARCH local priorities

2A: Estimate owners
2B: Support types (s)

General housing supply

- ARCH-affordable housing
- ARCH-housing

Beaux Arts Village
Hill - Hunts Point
County - Kirkland
Newcastle - R
Woodin

Indigent defense

Increase state support and funding for indigent defense services to meet existing needs as well as the new lower caseload mandates ordered by the Washington Supreme Court. Enhance state support for increasing the indigent defense workforce with incentives and programs to encourage more public defenders.

Transportation

Increase sustainable revenue that supports local transportation preservation, maintenance, and operations and includes direct distributions to cities and towns. Continue to support efforts to improve traffic safety. Explore revenue tools such as a highway usage fee, a retail delivery fee, expanded transportation benefit district (TBD) authority, or a "sidewalk utility."

Housing supply

Provide time to implement recent state housing legislation. Increase housing investments to meet needs across the housing continuum, including construction and preservation of affordable housing, home ownership, and senior housing. Support tools to better coordinate urban growth area (UGA) development and funding options such as a local option real estate excise tax, short-term rental tax, and expanded use of lodging taxes for housing.

Shared revenues

Continue the historical revenue-sharing partnership between the state and its cities and towns, which provides stability and continuity for local budgets. Preservation of these resources, such as liquor revenues and criminal justice assistance funds, are indispensable to local fiscal sustainability and predictability.



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Next Steps

- After Council review and approval of text version of the priorities, staff will proceed with final design and layout of the document, similar to the look and feel of the 2025 Legislative Priorities (see Exhibit 2).
- The 2026 State Legislative Priorities will be published on the City's website, shared with the community, and distributed to the City's legislative delegation and other partners.



Recommended Motion

- Adopt the City of Mercer Island 2026 State Legislative Priorities, substantially in the form attached as Exhibit 1 to AB 6817

