

CITY COUNCIL AGENDA TOPIC

Resolution of the City Council of the City of Bellevue, Washington, supporting the countywide ballot proposition for funding the Medic One/Emergency Medical Services (EMS) levy for the period from January 1, 2026, through December 31, 2031, pursuant to RCW 84.52.069.

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City Manager's Office

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**ACTION**

On February 11, Council directed staff to prepare a resolution supporting placement of a proposed renewal of a six-year King County Medic One/Emergency Medical Services Levy. This resolution supports placing the 2026-2031 Levy on the November 2025 countywide ballot.

RECOMMENDATION

Move to adopt Resolution 10502

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS

The King County Medic One/EMS system is primarily funded with a countywide, voter approved levy. The current EMS levy expires at the end of 2025. An EMS Advisory Task Force, consisting of elected officials from throughout King County, began meeting in February 2024. The 20-member Task Force members included elected officials from the County, cities, and fire districts, representing those who administer, authorize, and are served by the system. Mayor Lynne Robinson represented Bellevue in the Task Force. In September 2024, the Task Force adopted final programmatic and financial recommendations which became the basis for the EMS levy proposal that is anticipated to be transmitted to the King County Council by the County Executive in late-March.

For the King County Council to place an EMS levy on the countywide ballot, state law requires the legislative bodies of at least 75 percent of the cities within the County that have populations exceeding 50,000 to approve placing an EMS levy proposal on the ballot. Bellevue is one of the cities whose population exceeds 50,000.

On February 11, Council received a briefing regarding the proposed EMS levy. The Council discussed the current service level and how Bellevue residents and visitors benefit from continuing a regional approach to EMS services. Based on Council direction at the February 11 Study Session, this Resolution supports placing the Medic One/EMS levy on the November 2025 ballot.

Proposed 2026-2031 EMS Levy Rate

Since 1979, the EMS system has been funded through a series of voter approved levies. The current six-year EMS levy expires December 31. To ensure continued emergency medical services in 2026 and beyond, a new levy must be approved by voters. The proposed starting EMS levy rate is \$0.25 per \$1,000 of AV for 2026-2031, which would raise nearly \$1.5 billion over the course of the levy. In 2026, Bellevue property owners would contribute approximately \$24 million per year under the proposed new rate.

With the adoption of the countywide EMS Levy, Bellevue residents and visitors will continue to receive consistent and standardized care throughout the County. Additionally, the countywide EMS system provides resources that may be needed from outside agencies during any significant medical emergency event occurring in the City of Bellevue.

Tiered Medical Model

Medicine is the foundation of the Medic One/EMS system. Services provided by EMS personnel are derived from the highest standards of medical training, practices and care, scientific evidence, and close supervision by EMS physicians. The tiered system is predicated on Basic Life Support (BLS) agencies responding to every incident to stabilize the patient and secure the scene. This reserves the more limited regional resource of an Advanced Life Support (ALS) unit (known locally as a medic unit) for the serious or life-threatening injuries and illnesses. Managing the calls requiring advanced levels of care improves paramedic patient skills, conserves paramedic services for events requiring advanced skills, and reduces the number of calls to which paramedics respond.

Compared to systems that send paramedics on all calls, the Medic One/EMS system in King County can provide excellent response and patient care with fewer paramedics. The Tiered Medical Model pairs highly successful outcomes with reasonable cost controls, features that are unique to the King County system.

In 2023, Bellevue responded to 16,215 EMS incidents throughout our service area. 4,359 were for ALS and 11,856 were for BLS.

Services funded by the proposed 2026-2031 EMS Levy include:

Basic Life Support (BLS) Services: BLS personnel are the “first responders” to an incident, providing immediate basic life support medical care that includes advanced first aid and Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation/Automatic External Defibrillator to stabilize the patient. Staffed by firefighters trained as Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs), BLS units arrive at the scene in less than five minutes on average. BLS contributes significantly to the success of the Medic One/EMS system. The EMS levy provides partial funding to local fire departments to provide these services. The proposed BLS funding formula is based on assessed valuation (AV) and calls for service

Advanced Life Support (ALS) Services: Paramedics provide out-of-hospital emergency medical care for critical or life-threatening injuries and illnesses. They provide physician-level invasive procedures including airway control, heart pacing, the dispensing of medicine and other lifesaving procedures.

There are 27 ALS units located throughout King County, strategically placed for optimal response times. ALS providers receive full funding from the EMS Levy for providing these services. Bellevue is one of five regional providers of ALS services in King County

Mobile Integrated Healthcare (MIH): The proposed levy includes \$50 million over six years specifically for MIH services. MIH funding would be distributed using the same allocation method as BLS, based on AV and calls for service. The funding Bellevue is estimated to receive is nearly \$1.2 million in the first year of the proposed levy for MIH services.

Regional Support Services: The King County EMS Division manages core regional Medic One/EMS programs critical to providing the highest quality out-of-hospital emergency care available, and provision of these services have proven more effective and/or economical when delivered on a regional basis. These services emphasize uniformity of medical care across jurisdictions and consistency in training. Regional Services provided by the County include paramedic and EMT training, development of medical protocols, and medical quality assurance and review.

Strategic Initiatives: Strategic Initiatives are pilot programs designed to improve the quality of Medic One and EMS services, in addition to managing the growth and cost of the system. Successful initiatives may be incorporated into Regional Services as ongoing programs.

POLICY & FISCAL IMPACTS

Policy Impact

Council action to approve the Resolution will satisfy the requirements of RCW 84.52.069, which requires the legislative bodies of 75 percent of cities within the County with a population over 50,000 to approve a resolution authorizing placing the levy on the ballot.

State law permits EMS levies to be approved for six years, 10 years, or on a permanent basis. EMS levies have typically been approved for six years in King County.

Fiscal Impact

The current levy expires at the end of 2025. A new rate is set each year to collect the amount needed for the programs. The proposed levy rate is \$0.25 per \$1,000 of AV for 2026-2031 and would collect nearly \$1.5 billion countywide over the course of the levy. In 2026, Bellevue property owners would contribute approximately \$24 million per year under the proposed new rate. With the proposed rate of \$0.25 per \$1,000 of assessed value, a \$1,000,000 Bellevue home would pay \$250 per year for EMS services, an increase of approximately \$30 per year over the existing levy.

Failure to reauthorize the levy will result in a loss of historical funding to provide ALS and some BLS services. The City's adopted 2025-2026 operating budget assumes revenue and associated expenses based on the proposed levy.

OPTIONS

1. Adopt the Resolution supporting the countywide ballot proposition for funding the Medic One/Emergency Medical Services (EMS) levy for the period from January 1, 2026, through December 31, 2031, pursuant to RCW 84.52.069.
2. Do not adopt the Resolution and provide alternative direction to staff.

ATTACHMENTS

Proposed Resolution No. 10502

AVAILABLE IN COUNCIL LIBRARY

N/A