

## Help for at-risk youths threatened

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Some services for at-risk youths could be in jeopardy but new funding for roads could be on the horizon as Virginia officials look to cut spending yet reinvigorate transportation projects across the commonwealth.

Prince William officials [told the Board of County Supervisors on Tuesday](#) that programs funded by the state but offered under the county's Department of Social Services might be cut. Gov. Robert F. McDonnell (R) has proposed eliminating all non-mandated programs that are available for at-risk youths.

Prince William Social Services Director Janine Sewell said some of the services at risk include providing parents assistance, mentoring children, counseling and hands-on activities that help prevent children from having to be removed from their home.

In fiscal 2010, Prince William served 224 at-risk children who will potentially lose support if the state makes the cuts. Although the board could restore the programs with local funds, it is generally not the board's policy to replace cuts made at the state or federal level, county officials said.

"This has been put forward as a cost-savings measure . . . but it puts localities in an awkward position," Supervisor Martin E. Nohe (R-Coles) said. "The vast majority of these kids receiving non-mandated services are receiving them to prevent them from receiving mandated ones. This is a one-year savings that will be more than eaten up in the long run."

The state has also proposed to reduce its share of funding for therapeutic foster care, Sewell said, noting that the county serves about 10 children a month in that program geared toward children with special needs.

The county pays 34 cents of every dollar used in the therapeutic home program, but under the governor's proposal, that rate would increase about 25 percent, Sewell said. If both sets of cuts are approved, Sewell said, her department would lose \$854,000 in state funding.

Even as social services faces a budget hit, McDonnell has proposed to invest [\\$4 billion](#) in transportation projects. His proposals include using \$1.1 billion worth of GARVEE bonds - or grant anticipation revenue vehicles - and creating a new Virginia transportation infrastructure bank by privatizing liquor sales.

McDonnell said the new funding would be used for roughly 900 projects across the state. Some of the Prince William projects on his list include widening Route 28 to four lanes and realigning Route 215, widening Interstate 66 near Haymarket and building an interchange at Route 29 and Linton Hall Road.

County officials said they are also keeping an eye on some other issues before the General Assembly. The governor has proposed cutting a state-funded benefits package to public safety

employees. The package was created in 1966 and provides police, fire and rescue personnel with additional benefits if they are killed or injured in the line of duty.

The benefits are state-mandated, which would mean the county would have to foot the bill beginning in July. County officials said about 1,600 people are potentially eligible for such benefits and that the benefits would cost Prince William about \$392,000 in fiscal 2012 and about \$1 million by 2015.