

The Connector



January 2016

Message from WisDOT Secretary Mark Gottlieb

Looking back on 2015, I'm reminded of all our valued public and private sector partners who help us reach our many transportation-related goals. Without your cooperation and professional expertise, there is simply no way we could meet our comprehensive multi-modal transportation responsibilities. Despite ongoing challenges, we continue to find innovative and cost-effective ways to deliver transportation projects and services that help keep people and commerce moving across Wisconsin.

This edition of the WisDOT Connector reflects on some of our key accomplishments from last year along with a look at some of the challenges ahead. I thank all of you for helping us get the very most from current transportation resources and wish everyone a safe and happy 2016.

Transportation funding

Transportation funding remains a major focus at state and federal legislative levels. The 2015 - 2017 state budget provides nearly \$7 billion for transportation, allowing us to move forward on numerous projects, support all modes along with local aids. State legislative debate focused on the overall level of transportation bonding including \$350 million in contingency bonding. Last November, the Joint Committee on Finance approved the contingency bonding - \$200 million over the two-year budget cycle for the Major Highway Development Program and \$150 million for the State Highway Rehabilitation Program. It means that major highway projects in Wisconsin - instead of facing two-year delays - will now face only one-year delays. It will help us get through the current two-year state fiscal period - but doesn't solve the long-term transportation revenue problem.

The state budget provided \$1 million to assess the solvency of the state transportation fund. As part of this assessment, WisDOT is overseeing a tolling feasibility study limited to Interstate highways. By the end of 2016, the study will identify:

- Best practices in current tolling programs, laws, structures and methods in other states;
- Recommended programs, laws, structures, methods and locations for Wisconsin; and

- The expected net funds that could be generated

If Congress and the State Legislature determine tolling is part of Wisconsin's transportation funding future, it would help us address Interstate highway needs - and in the process - free up funds that could then be directed towards other transportation priorities.

At the federal level, Congress recently approved a five-year surface transportation bill (Fixing America's Surface Transportation or FAST Act). Following a series of short-term extensions, the longer-term package offers additional certainty about funding and program structures. Most programs will see modest, inflationary funding increases from 1% to 4% over current levels during the five-year period. Unfortunately, the federal measure does not reflect a true transportation user fee approach. Only about two-thirds of federal transportation funding is generated from user fees with the rest coming from a variety of general fund sources. In five years - or possibly sooner - Congress will again face the need to identify a long-term revenue source for transportation.

State traffic deaths up in 2015

Similar to 35 other states, Wisconsin experienced an increase in traffic fatalities last year. Wisconsin recorded a preliminary total of 560 traffic deaths in 2015 - up about 13 percent compared to 2014's record low of 494 fatalities. Likely factors behind the higher number of traffic deaths last year include warm spring weather, low gas prices, and an improving economy that combined to generate more travel and greater potential for crashes. To help prevent crashes and deaths, state and local law enforcement task forces are working to curb impaired and distracted driving. Also, high-visibility education and law enforcement efforts are used throughout the year to educate motorists and encourage them to follow traffic safety laws. State transportation safety officials urge all drivers to watch their speed, buckle up and eliminate distractions.

Ongoing freight focus

Governor Walker has made freight transport a top priority as the overall amount of freight movement continues to increase along highways, railroads, at harbors and airports. Beginning in 2011, WisDOT sponsored four annual state freight summits that gathered public and private sector officials. These summits led to numerous accomplishments, including creation of a 45-member [Freight Advisory Committee](#) which met twice in 2015.



One of the FACs key roles is assisting the department in development of the first-ever [Statewide Freight Plan](#). The plan will play a major role in shaping strategies to help Wisconsin remain competitive in the global marketplace. Initial plan drafting is underway. A final plan should be ready by the end of this year.

I-41 designation/speed limit change

Last April, following a decade of federal, state and local efforts, the Federal Highway Administration approved designation of the 175-mile highway 41 corridor between Green Bay and the Wisconsin/Illinois border as an Interstate route. Installation of about 3,500 signs associated with the I-41 designation was recently completed. Elevating highway 41 to an Interstate provides an important corridor identity that will encourage economic development in communities all along the route. Of the 26 major distribution centers in Wisconsin, 73 percent are located within five miles of an Interstate.

Also last year, following passage of state legislation (2015 Wisconsin Act 19), new speed limit signs went up along Wisconsin Interstates and some freeways. Last June, county highway crews installed 70 mph speed limit signs along 810 miles of Wisconsin Interstates previously posted at 65 mph. In November, county workers installed 70 mph speed limit signs along nine non-Interstate freeway segments in Wisconsin totaling about 161 miles. It's possible more freeway segments (with access only via ramps and interchanges) will be posted at 70 mph in the future.

DMV highlights from 2015

WisDOT's Division of Motor Vehicles began issuing new driver licenses and identification cards this fall that are the most secure in the United States. An innovative polycarbonate card and laser-engraved photos are the most prominent features designed to curb fraud and identity theft.

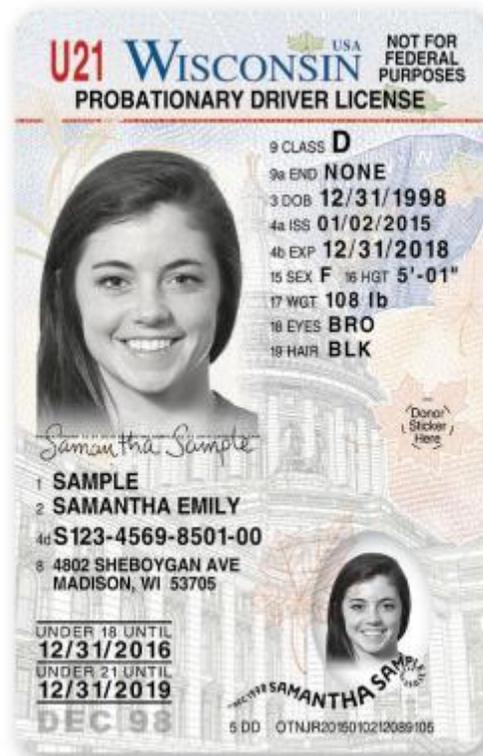


New driver license/ID for those over 21

The successful implementation involved: a detailed inventory of all 92 DMV offices and installing new equipment; training nearly 400 DMV employees in three weeks; and managing more than 10 terabytes of data including the transfer of 22 million photos and signatures to the new system. The change was implemented within one month with minimal customer disruptions.

DMV continues to enhance online services:

- Customers who sign up for [eNotify](#) receive license plate renewal notices by email or text message (instead of a postcard) with embedded links to online renewal application and payment options
- [eMV Public](#) allows people to title and register their vehicle purchased from a private seller with one stop (online registration payment has been enhanced)
- The mobile-friendly [Driver License Guide](#) helps Commercial Driver License holders comply with new regulations by enabling them to check their eligibility and status to ensure they have the proper endorsements
- An online chat service answers many DMV customer questions, and an online process for health care specialists can be used to certify disabled parking eligibility
- The Motorists' Handbook in English became available as an eBook so rules of the road can be kept on drivers' tablets and other mobile devices.



New driver license/ID for those under 21



The Wisconsin Department of Transportation's MAPSS Performance Improvement Program reviews performance measures for five key goal areas that guide us in achieving our mission - mobility, accountability, preservation, safety and service. To check out the latest online reports, simply click on the MAPSS logo.

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