

## Harbor Assistance Program (Wis. Stats. 85.095 & Wis. Admin Code TRANS 28)

### Program Overview

- The Wisconsin Harbor Assistance Program (HAP) was established in 1979 to assist harbor communities along the Great Lakes and Mississippi River in maintaining an improving waterborne commerce.
- Statute 85.095 authorizes WisDOT to provide harbor assistance through grants and provides selection criteria.
- TRANS 28 sets forth the policies and procedures for reviewing applications and administering the program.
- Since 1980, WisDOT has spent more than \$140 million to fund harbor improvements projects through 114 grants.
- Water transportation is a fuel-efficient way to move bulk commodities and Wisconsin's 29 commercial ports and harbors are a direct link to world markets.
- Wisconsin Harbors and Ports currently move 40 million tons of cargo each year.
- Projects typically include dock reconstruction, mooring structure replacement, dredging, the construction of facilities to dispose of dredged material, and facilities to accommodate cruise vessels and ferries.

### Program Funding

- State statute 85.095 authorizes harbor assistance grants for repair, rehabilitation, and improvement of commercial ports and harbors.
- HAP is primarily funded by General Obligation bonds and approximately \$1 million in SEG funds each biennium. The department must request an increase in the bonding authority to be able to fund any new projects in the next biennium.

### Challenges

- From the 2018 Three-year harbor development statement of intentions current estimated harbor project backlog totals for the 2019-2021 biennium include \$143.5 million in projects which at 80% funding would result in up to \$114.8 million HAP grant funds.
- The current Department budget request for HAP for SFY 2019-21 includes no funding for the harbor assistance program bond funding (Approp. 661) and no segregated funding, nor a recommendation to increase funding for the program. In the absence of a recommendation to, at minimum, bond fund this program (as has been done in past budget cycles, no new grants may be awarded for needy projects in 2019 or 2020.
- Without maintained harbor investment from the state, conditions at Wisconsin's commercial ports will deteriorate and the potential for the state's commercial ports as a source of economic development will remain underutilized.

### Policy and Budget Opportunities

- \$17.5 million of funding (bond and/or SEG) could significantly begin to address the HAP needs backlog.
- From the 2018 Three-year statement of intentions, which was received from 8 port/harbor locations across the state over \$143.5 million in projects were identified, requesting over \$35 million in potential grant requests for the 2019-2021 biennium.
- An additional \$31 million dollars was announced to support the Marinette Marine project at the Port of Marinette.