

Guidance for Reviewing Bridge Approach Lengths

WisDOT guidance recommends that approach lengths for Local Bridge projects be only long enough to render the bridge serviceable (to reach the attainable touchdown points using current standards). The reason for this eligibility restriction is that local bridge funds are meant for bridge work only. Applicants are required to calculate the estimated project cost for their proposed Local Bridge project using minimum practical approach lengths. WisDOT Regional Local Program staff will review the applications and scope the Local Bridge projects prior to final submittal into the Local Bridge Program. Local Bridge applications which have approach lengths up to 100-feet will have the approach costs included in the estimated participating cost for approach work. When applications approach lengths are greater than the 100-foot total (desirable length), they fall under the Approach Length Justification Policy as outlined in the FDM **3-20-1** (<https://wisconsindot.gov/rdwy/fdm/fd-03-20.pdf>)(FDM update scheduled for 8/15/2021). The project sponsor may request Local Bridge funding for approach work beyond 100-feet at the time of application, however sufficient justification is required.

For approach lengths identified between 100-feet and 300-feet, per the Approach Length Justification policy, the WisDOT Region can include these as participating costs in the application. The Local Sponsor must address the additional approach length in the application and provide sufficient justification as determined through the review of the following:

- hydrology reports
- historical flood data
- safety data
- AADT data
- Prior Preliminary Design
- environmental considerations, or
- other appropriate data points.

The justification of extended approaches will be documented during the review of the applications. If the WisDOT Region determines that the extended approach lengths are appropriate (up to 300-feet), then the entire approach costs will be included in the total estimate of costs at the time of application. If the Region can't justify the additional approach lengths and corresponding estimated costs, the project will still be allowed to move forward, but will only be funded the participating costs associated with approach lengths up to 100-feet. If during the design process it is determined that extended approach lengths are eligible, they will then be required to follow the Approach Length Justification policy.

For approach lengths identified as greater than 300-feet at application, those projects will initially be approved at the 300-foot estimated cost (as long as the costs are justified up to 300-feet). Bridge approach lengths beyond 300-feet should be identified as non-participating costs in the project application. After the project is selected/approved into the Local Bridge Program, and at 30 % design and/or Design Study Report (DSR) stage, the Sponsor will be required to submit an Approach Length Justification Report to WisDOT if they would like the full approach length to be funded as a participating cost. The Local Sponsor may choose to fund additional approach work as 100% locally funded (non-participating), but this must be identified in their State Municipal Agreement. Approach costs greater than 300-feet in length cannot approved at time of application, but may be determined as eligible costs after review and approval of the Approach Length Justification Report as stated above.