

Wisconsin Department of Transportation

2022-2027 Local Program Guidelines

STP-Urban, STP-Rural and Local Bridge

Effective May 14, 2021

Purpose and Description

These guidelines provide direction for project requests for the Wisconsin Department of Transportation's (WisDOT's) 2022-2027 "Local Program Cycle," defined in this solicitation as the statewide Surface Transportation Program (STP)-Urban, STP-Rural and Local Bridge programs.

It is important to note that local improvement projects on connecting highways are not eligible for STP-Urban, STP-Rural and Local Bridge funds. Per Wisconsin Statutes, funds provided to local units of government are to be used for eligible projects on routes other than state trunk highway or connecting highway routes (Wis. Stats. [20.395\(2\)\(eq\)](#); [20.395\(2\)\(ev\)](#); [20.395\(2\)\(ex\)](#); [20.395\(2\)\(fx\)](#); and [84.18\(2\)\(d\)](#)). Once a project is approved and authorized, the sponsor has a maximum of six and a half years to construct the project and have it in final acceptance. This WisDOT sunset policy was implemented in the 2011-2014 program cycle and continues to provide ample time for local sponsors to program and build improvements without being impacted by the Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA's) 10-year requirement. It also helps ensure statewide funding provided by Congress and the state Legislature for local improvements is utilized within a reasonable timeframe.

To continue statewide program stability efforts, WisDOT will manage a full five fiscal year program of projects for each of these programs. In each odd year, this provides the department and local sponsors the ability to review and adjust the already scheduled first two years of the programs (2023 and 2024) as needed, and add another three full years of approved projects to the schedule (2025, 2026 and 2027). WisDOT will solicit for the 2022-2027 program cycle and repeat the same process, beginning with a review and adjustment opportunity for 2023 and 2024.

There are additional challenges that may impact funding levels for the 2022-2027 program, including:

- Continuation of the current program cycle length after expanding in the previous program cycles
- Projects approved in past cycles that have not yet been delivered, and
- State and federal budget pressures.

WisDOT will provide County Highway Commissioners with summaries of current entitlement balances. An updated application form, specifically developed for the 2022-2027 program cycle, will be required for all project requests. WisDOT regional representatives will review and approve the completed applications. The cost estimates in the approved applications will not be included in the Concept Definition Report (CDR) and will be kept confidential for the purpose of baseline costs for program tracking or reporting.

The state's multimodal freight network is a topic of increased interest for transportation stakeholders. The freight network is composed of highways, local roads, rail lines, ports and airports. The network identifies the role of different transportation facilities in shipping freight to and from Wisconsin. Please refer to the following link for additional information:

<https://wisconsin.gov/Pages/projects/sfp/default.aspx>

STP-Urban

Federal law allocates STP-Urban funding using population as a basis for funding distribution. Urbanized and urban area designations are federally determined by population density. State borders are irrelevant in this initial designation. Funding for these multi-state entities is provided to each state based on its share of the urban or urbanized area population. As a result of the 2010 Census, there are now six Transportation Management Areas (TMAs) (Appleton, Green Bay, Madison, Milwaukee, Minneapolis-St. Paul, and Round Lake Beach) in Wisconsin. STP-Urban projects are funded 80 percent federal and 20 percent local, except within an urbanized area, where the federal share may be as low as 50 percent federal at project approval.

Urbanized Areas

Within urbanized areas, the Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) are responsible for the approval of projects at a reasonable participating federal limit, not to exceed 80 percent federal. STP-Urban funds may be spent inside or outside the urban boundaries of urbanized areas. Because urbanized areas receive a fixed allocation, they may choose to extend a project outside the urbanized area boundary to the Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA) boundary. MPAs include the census-defined urbanized area plus contiguous areas expected to become urbanized within the 20-year forecast period of the MPO long-range transportation plan.

Wisconsin's 18 urbanized areas receive an annual allocation based on their population. Urbanized areas must program all available funds in each program cycle. Funds may not be reserved for cost increases or as carryover.

All 18 urbanized areas must stay within their allocation of funds; allocations cannot be adjusted upward. Project growth will need to be monitored by WisDOT regional staff, the MPO and communities within the region through cooperative agreements within the urbanized area. Responsible choices based on mutual decision-making and consultation with WisDOT will enhance the ability of the MPOs to manage their allocation and reduce the need for state intervention. Because allocations are a finite amount of funding, all MPO projects must be capped, as specified in the State Municipal Agreement (SMA).

All projects in areas above 50,000 in population should be part of the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) process, and must be contained in their TIP prior to project authorization. If the project is not included in the TIP, an amendment to the TIP will be necessary before the project will be authorized.

WisDOT no longer provides entitlement balances to TMAs and urbanized areas, as a WisDOT statewide formula process is not used to distribute funds to communities in urbanized areas.

Urban Areas

For urban areas, annual funding for each of the two categories (5,000 to 20,000 and 20,000 to 50,000 in population) continues to be allocated by population. Wisconsin uses a statewide formula ranking process to distribute funds to communities in urban areas based on eligible centerline mileage. As a result of the 2010 Census, there are 52 urban areas in the state.

STP-Rural

Wisconsin uses a statewide formula ranking process to distribute STP-Rural funding. The formula is based 60 percent on a county's proportionate share of statewide rural centerline mileage and 40 percent on its proportionate share of statewide rural registration.

STP-Rural funds may only be spent outside urban boundaries. The current formula generates funding priority based on factors completely outside of urban and urbanized areas. By long-standing department policy, in Wisconsin, county highway commissioners set priorities for STP-Rural funding within their counties. In Wisconsin it is not appropriate to allow counties to propose the funding of projects within urban boundaries. It is the county highway commissioners' responsibility to ensure no projects are submitted for STP-Rural funding that are located within urban boundaries. STP-Rural projects are funded 80 percent federal and 20 percent local. A roadway must be functionally classified as a major collector or higher to apply for STP-Rural funding.

Local Bridge

Wisconsin uses a statewide ranking process to distribute Local Bridge funding as required in Wisconsin Statute [84.18\(5\)](#). The formula uses Statewide Bridge Replacement Cost as a basis for distribution of funds. Each county gets a proportional share of the total allocation based on a statewide average cost of replacing those bridges with a sufficiency rating (SR) less than 50. While the cost analysis is based on replacement, the SR determines whether the bridge is eligible for replacement or rehabilitation funds at the cost share of 80 percent federal or state and 20 percent local.

County highway commissioners establish bridge priorities within their county per [TRANS 213](#). To be eligible for federal aid, structures must be located on a locally owned public roadway (not on a connecting highway), the structure must have a span of greater than 20 feet, a SR of 80 or less for rehabilitation or a SR of less than 50 for replacement, and be either "functionally obsolete" or "structurally deficient." In addition, the bridge must not have been constructed or reconstructed in the last 10 years regardless of the funding source. This requirement excludes routine maintenance work. These definitions are part of the federal requirements. In general, "functionally obsolete" means that the width, vertical clearance or load rating of the bridge does not meet modern standards (rating of 3 or less). In general, "structurally deficient" means that a major element of the bridge is seriously deteriorated or damaged (rating of 4 or less for deck, abutments or girders).

To maximize the number of bridges improved through the Local Bridge Program, funding eligibility is limited to the minimum project scope necessary for a safe and effective facility. The starting point for determination of the eligible scope is based on the existing facility. The scope of the project may increase based on safety, conformance with applicable minimum federal and state engineering standards, projected traffic needs, or other factors as approved by WisDOT.

[TRANS 213](#) also allows rehabilitation projects to occur on bridges with a SR of 80 or less if certain conditions are met. An engineering study must be undertaken independently by the local agency (i.e., using local dollars) prior to application. The consulting firm that completes the independent engineering study is not eligible to work on the design project. The study needs to show the rehabilitation would satisfy all three of the following:

- Be cost effective
- Extend the life of the bridge by at least 10 years
- Correct all deficiencies

Projects cannot be submitted for rehabilitation with a SR greater than 80. The state requirements of functionally obsolete and structurally deficient will determine an eligible project, not its ability to return the SR above 80.

Local Bridge Policy/Process Issues

1. Bridge Inventory List

Bridges must be on the 2021 or newer bridge inventory list, which is now created by the WisDOT Bureau of Structures, and have both the SR and the necessary deficient components that make up the SR, to be eligible to apply for federal funding. The 2021 bridge inventory list will be published and distributed to all county highway commissioners. Contact your county highway commissioner to determine if a bridge is on the list. An exception to the above-mentioned eligibility requirements may be made for emergency bridge rehabilitation or replacement projects. This exception will only be approved upon review of the latest inspection reports and acceptance by a WisDOT bridge engineer that determines the structure has both the SR and necessary deficient components to make it eligible for funding.

2. Bridge Approaches

The “Policy on Local Program Bridge Approaches” has been completed and is incorporated into WisDOT’s Facilities Development Manual (FDM). The FDM chapter with this policy is available on WisDOT’s roadway standards webpage: <https://wisconsin.gov/Pages/doing-bus/eng-consultants/cnslt-rsrcs/rdwy/default.aspx>.

3. State Municipal Agreements-Local Bridge Program

Local Bridge projects must have only one sponsor identified in the SMA.

General Policy/Process Issues

1. Statewide Consistency

WisDOT continues to strive for statewide consistency within the Local Program in order to streamline processes for internal and external stakeholders. Statewide consistency improvements that will be implemented for the 2022-2027 program cycle include:

- Updated electronic statewide project application forms
- Updated statewide SMA templates and processes
- Revised project cost estimating tools for local project sponsors, including a new bridge estimating tool and prioritization criteria created by the WisDOT Bureau of Structures.

2. Project Application Review and Estimate Verification

WisDOT staff in each region office will provide application assistance to local units of government for the 2022-2027 program cycle. This includes WisDOT review and approval of applications' project scope, accurate improvement type, estimated costs, and a realistic project schedule. Local officials should contact their WisDOT Region Local Program Manager with application process questions. The final project scope, improvement type, cost and delivery schedule continues to be the responsibility of the local sponsor. The applications will serve as the concept definition report (CDR) for all approved projects excluding the confidential cost estimate section. Additional information on application and cost estimating tools can be found at the following WisDOT webpage: <https://wisconsin.gov/Pages/doing-bus/local-gov/astnce-pgms/highway/tools.aspx>. WisDOT Region staff may revise estimates in the applications based on the complexity of the project or other factors.

3. Evaluation of Rail Issues

To ensure compliance with both state and federal law and policy, all projects with any of the following conditions must be evaluated for rail issues:

- A railroad crossing located within the project limits or within 1,000 feet of the project location and/or on the designated detour route.
- Grade separations between a highway and a railroad.
- Projects that parallel a railroad on adjacent right of way.
- Projects that use railroad properties.
- Projects that involve adjustments to railroad facilities.
- Projects that will impact a corridor reserved under an applicable recreational trails program.

Evaluation may require coordination with the railroad company at an early stage (sometimes even prior to submitting the project application). WisDOT Region Railroad Coordinators are available to assist with this coordination. Project limits should not be adjusted to "gap" the railroad crossing to avoid coordination.

Approved projects that meet any of the above conditions will require railroad coordination and will likely require the development and execution of a railroad agreement. It is not uncommon for this step to take a substantial amount of time. Project development schedules should provide for sufficient time for these activities.

4. Bicycle and Pedestrian Accommodations

As part of the 2015-2017 Wisconsin budget bill Act 55, State Statute 84.01(35) was modified. A frequently asked questions (FAQs) document has been developed with regards to the modifications to the Bicycle and Pedestrian State Statute 84.01(35). The purpose of this document is to provide consistent direction to Department staff as well as our consultants and local partners. There is no

prescribed process yet developed for establishing bicycle and pedestrian facilities for projects with federal funding and for projects on the National Highway System (NHS). The Department and FHWA have been working for a while and continue to work on a process that coordinates both state and federal requirements. In the meantime, Central Office staff can provide assistance on an individual project-by-project basis. Coordinate this request with the Regional Oversight Engineer and the Bike/ Pedestrian Coordinator for Central Office assistance.

The FAQs may be found on the multimodal projects and studies web site under complete streets: <https://wisconsindot.gov/Pages/projects/multimodal/ped.aspx>

5. Prohibition on Charging Local Oversight Costs to Federal Aid Projects

Local project sponsors cannot charge local staff oversight or administrative costs to any federal aid project.

6. Timely Use of Funds

Projects are expected to utilize federal or state funds within a reasonable timeframe. Failure to do so unnecessarily reserves spending authority that could be used by other eligible local governments. In accordance with the WisDOT sunset policy, 2022-2027 program cycle projects must be constructed and in final acceptance within six full fiscal years of the onset of the program cycle or by June 30, 2028.

7. Project Substitutions

Project sponsors are limited to two substitutions per project. One substitution request may be based on any reason provided by the project sponsor. A second substitution can be requested based on documented issues with a project. Additional substitutions are subject to WisDOT approval.

8. Additional Federal Funding Source - Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP)

The Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) is a federal reimbursement program that funds highway safety projects at sites that have experienced a high crash history. The overall objective of HSIP is to develop and implement, on a continuing basis, stand-alone safety projects designed to reduce the number and severity of crashes on all streets and highways (state and local). The funding ratio for HSIP funds is 90 percent federal, and usually requires a 10 percent match of state and/or local funds. Emphasis is on low-cost and data-supported safety treatments that can be implemented quickly. Refer to the following link to reference the WisDOT HSIP web page: <https://wisconsindot.gov/Pages/doing-bus/local-gov/astnce-pgms/highway/hsip.aspx>.

General Instructions

1. WisDOT Region Managers should not allow local communities to request design and construction for the same project in the same fiscal year.
2. No applications for design only will be approved for funding, and all designs that are requested must be tied to a construction project.

3. Existing projects that were approved in previous program cycles may not request additional funding for those projects through a new program cycle.
4. Because a new program is being developed, project substitutions will not be accepted between October 15, 2021, and February 5, 2022. This window may be lengthened or shortened based on the determination of WisDOT Bureau of Transit, Local Roads, Railroads, and Harbors staff. WisDOT Region staff will be notified of any changes to these dates as soon as possible.
5. All projects must have a signed, accepted SMA in place before any funds can be obligated.
6. All funding will be limited at the estimate amount unless an increase is approved by WisDOT. Additional costs incurred over the limit will be 100% the responsibility of the project sponsor.

Schedule for Program Approvals

As the schedule below indicates, the STP-Urban, STP-Rural and Local Bridge programs will be developed and approved within the same timeframe.

**WisDOT Schedule
2022-2027 Local Highway Improvement Program**

Program	Project Applications Due to WisDOT	Approved Programs Sent to Regions	Approved Programs Published
STP-Urban	Friday, October 15, 2021	Friday, February 25, 2022	Friday, March 11, 2022
STP-Rural	Friday, October 15, 2021	Friday, February 25, 2022	Friday, March 11, 2022
Local Bridge	Friday, October 15, 2021	Friday, February 25, 2022	Friday, March 11, 2022

Because the STP-Urban, STP-Rural and Local Bridge programs involve close cooperation with local units of government, guidelines for the cyclical development of these programs, along with subsequent information updates, will continue to be published on [WisDOT's website](#).

WisDOT Region Contact List

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