

Local Bridge Assistance Program Frequently Asked Questions

August 2025

EmR2509 and Trans 213

1. Do I still need a sufficiency rating less than 80 to qualify for funding?

No, a sufficiency rating less than 80 is no longer a requirement to apply for the Local Bridge Improvement Assistance Program. Emergency rule [EmR2509](#) allows applications for bridge work to be submitted based on the National Bridge Inventory (NBI) condition assessment rating (deck, superstructure, substructure, culvert). This significantly increases the number of bridges which can be included in the application process and allows for more rehabilitation and preservation work. The new eligibility will save taxpayer money now and in the future by helping local owners implement sound asset management practices.

2. The sufficiency rating for my bridge is less than 50, why isn't it on the Bridge Project Scope Eligibility List?

The calculation for sufficiency rating is based on many factors beyond structure condition, including detour length, average daily traffic, approach roadway width, highway designation, etc. The previous version of Trans 213 allowed for rehabilitation of structures with a sufficiency rating of 80 or less, and replacement for structures with a sufficiency rating of 50 or less. This led to some situations where a structure in need of replacement maintained a sufficiency rating that was not, and would never be, below 50. The reverse situation also occurred resulting in a sufficiency rating of less than 50 for structures that did not need replacement.

Sufficiency ratings are no longer used nationally. This calculated rating system was maintained in Wisconsin due to the previous language in Trans 213 that defined how bridges were eligible for the local bridge assistance program. The revisions to Trans 213 eligibility criteria better align with modern national asset management practices.

3. How did WisDOT come up with the Bridge Project Scope Eligibility list?

WisDOT uses the Wisconsin Structures Asset Management System, or WiSAMS, to determine the Bridge Project Scope Eligibility List. WiSAMS' core function is to produce recommendations for structure improvement work using a consistent, objective, data-driven, logic-based process. WiSAMS rules are based on the asset management and bridge preservation policy documented in the [Wisconsin Bridge Manual Chapter 42 – Bridge Preservation](#).

4. Can I only submit work for what is shown in the Bridge Project Scope Eligibility List?

The bridge work shown in the eligibility list is the most applicable work based on the latest inspection (prior to February 2025). This work represents the "primary" work to be performed (deck replacement, overlay, etc.). The scope of the project may also include "secondary" work (concrete surface repair, adding riprap, etc.). These secondary work items can be included in the "Project Justification" section of the application. If you would like to submit a different "primary" work action, you will need to provide the required justification and supporting documentation as specified in the application materials.

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5. My bridge is posted, why isn't it on the Bridge Project Scope Eligibility List for full replacement?

The Bridge Project Scope Eligibility List work recommendations account for posting status, but also rely heavily on National Bridge Inventory (NBI) condition assessment ratings (deck, superstructure, substructure, culvert) and the element condition of individual bridge components. It is important to collect detailed element condition data during each routine inspection. An application can still be submitted for full replacement if appropriate justification and supporting documentation consistent with the requirements of [EmR2509](#) are provided.

6. My bridge isn't on the Bridge Project Scope Eligibility List, can I still submit an application for needed work?

Yes, it is possible to submit applications for bridges that are not on the Bridge Project Scope Eligibility List. Please refer to the application materials for details on the required justification. Applications can be submitted for preservation, rehabilitation, or reconstruction (full replacement), but require an engineering study to be submitted to the WisDOT Region contact by September 22, 2025. This will give department staff time to review the engineering study prior to the October 31, 2025, application deadline. The Bridge Project Scope Eligibility List provides a streamlined option to apply for needed bridge work; it does not restrict which bridges may be submitted for consideration. Please refer to [EmR2509](#) for bridge eligibility criteria.

7. Why are there so many structures eligible for Thin Polymer Overlays on the Bridge Scope Eligibility List?

Thin polymer overlays are a preservation tool to extend the life of newer bridge decks. When Trans 213 was rewritten, the intent was for local structure owners to use condition-based data to do the right work on the right structures at the right time. This means not only replacing structures at the end of their useful life, but also supporting cost-effective rehabilitation and preservation projects that extend the useful life of current structures.

8. What is required in the engineering study?

The engineering study should include information about the timing of the proposed project, alternative scopes, safety of the travelling public, structural serviceability, and a cost-benefit analysis of the proposed scope versus other viable options.

9. What happened to the template reports from the last solicitation?

The template reports used in the last solicitation were a means to streamline the rehabilitation reports required in the previous version of Trans 213, when used in conjunction with the Eligible Bridge List. The new language in [EmR2509](#) omits the need for a rehabilitation report. An engineering study is only required if the intended work differs from the Bridge Project Scope Eligibility List, or the structure is not listed on the Bridge Scope Eligibility List.

10. I have a structure on the list, but the work listed doesn't include everything that needs to be done. Can I do more work than what is shown on the eligibility list?

Yes, the work on the Bridge Project Scope Eligibility List represents the "primary" work to be performed. For rehabilitation and preservation projects, the scope of the project may also include

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“secondary” work. Secondary work is more minor work items, including but not limited to, concrete surface repair, adding riprap, replacing bearings, etc. Secondary work items should be discussed in the “Project Justification” section of the application and should be included in developing the project cost estimate.

11. Can a consultant that completes an engineering report also do the design work for the project?

No, this is a conflict of interest. The WisDOT Facilities Development Manual states “It is not permissible for a consultant to prepare an independent engineering study of a local bridge (per Trans 213) and then to perform design activities on the project.” The update to Trans 213 has not changed this language.

12. I have a question about a specific bridge. Who can be contacted for more information about a potential project before investing the time and money into an engineering study and application process?

The Bureau of Structures (BOS) is happy to assist our local partners with navigating this new process. Please direct further questions on the topic to the BOS Structures Development Chief Laura Shadewald at (608) 267-9592 or laura.shadewald@dot.wi.gov.

Application Process

13. How many projects can a sponsor submit?

Sponsors are permitted to submit as many projects as necessary if sponsor can fund their portion of each project. Projects must be submitted on separate applications. When a sponsor submits more than one project, the Project Priority ranking feature in the Cost Estimation section of each application should be used to designate a numerical priority to each project.

14. Does my project have to be submitted at a cost split of 80% State/Federal share, 20% Local Sponsor share?

For the 2026-2031 Program Cycle, Local Bridge project sponsors can request up to 80% of their project’s total cost estimate to be covered by State and Federal funding and are required to cover at least 20% of the overall cost estimate with funding from the local sponsor. Submissions under the 80% guidelines are welcome but will not be given preference strictly based on their split of the shares.

15. What are ways that the local sponsor can provide the 20% match?

Local sponsors can provide their 20% match through budgeting, or they can utilize the community to raise funds. In general, there are three main restrictions surrounding the local sponsor match. First, using another federal fund source to match any federal funds received from WisDOT is not permitted outside of very limited circumstances. Second, utilizing in-kind or “soft match donations” to satisfy a local match is not permitted. Finally, the local share must be paid monetarily.

16. What is the traditional timeline for solicitation and awarding?

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WisDOT generally solicits in an odd year and awards in the even years. Typically, applications are made available in the late spring or early summer of odd numbered calendar years with application deadlines in the fall. Award notifications are then sent in late spring or early summer of the following calendar year.

17. I've been awarded funds—can we get started right away?

Congratulations! Before immediately getting started and incurring costs on the project, the respective WisDOT region will be in contact to begin the State Municipal Agreement (SMA) and funding authorization process. Please do not incur any costs until a fully executed SMA has been received. Any costs incurred before the SMA is fully executed are not eligible for reimbursement.