

OFFICIAL MAP
OF THE
STATE TRUNK HIGHWAY SYSTEM
OF
WISCONSIN

"The Playground of the Middle West"

Showing the Numbered and Marked State Trunk Highway System and the Principal Secondary Highways; also locates Points of Historic, Scenic and Industrial Interest, State Parks and Institutions.

FOR EXPLANATION, SEE LOWER LEFT CORNER.

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Review of Wisconsin's Official State Highway Map

A Century-old Time Capsule Beyond Highway History

First printed in 1918, Wisconsin's Official State Highway Map is a time capsule of Wisconsin highway history and more. By reading each map, you can learn about road safety, former governors, highway improvements, tourism campaigns, and more. The full collection is now available in the Wisconsin Department of Transportation's Official State Highway Map Archive.



**Wisconsin Department
of Transportation**

April 2023

EXPLANATION

RED LINES show the STATE TRUNK HIGHWAY SYSTEM. The number in the circle on these lines is the number of that special State Trunk Highway. The same number is displayed on the road itself on the Standard Marker shown below, also on the Mile Markers and Signs. Where the line is dotted an appeal is pending on its location.

THIN RED LINES show the PRINCIPAL SECONDARY HIGHWAYS. They are generally in fair shape for travel, but are not usually so well maintained as the State Trunk Highways. In case of alternate routes it will be safer to follow the State Trunk Highway System.

OPEN CIRCLE locates POINTS OF HISTORIC INTEREST. See pages 4, 5 and 6 of Booklet for explanations.

OPEN TRIANGLE locates INDIAN MOUNDS and INDIAN VILLAGE SITES. See page 7 of Booklet for explanations.

OPEN CROSS locates POINTS OF SCENIC INTEREST. See pages 8 and 9 of Booklet for explanations.

OPEN SQUARE locates POINTS OF INDUSTRIAL INTEREST. See page 10 of Booklet for explanations.

OPEN STAR locates STATE PROPERTIES, PARKS AND INSTITUTIONS. See pages 11 and 12 of Booklet.

OFFICIAL MARKER



Markers on each State Trunk Highway numbered to correspond with the numbers shown on the Map.

Select from the Map the Route you wish to take and follow the Markers showing the selected numbers.

The Relative Importance of Places is shown by the Size of Type as follows:

- MILWAUKEE..... Between one and two miles
- GREEN BAY..... Between three and four miles
- MADISON..... State Capital over 10 miles
- PORT HURON..... Between five and ten miles
- CHICAGO..... Between ten and fifteen miles
- BOSTON..... Between fifteen and twenty miles
- MINNEAPOLIS..... Between twenty and thirty miles
- Other Indicating County Road
- Small County Road

MORE THAN A CENTURY OF TRADITION

In 1918, under the direction of the State Highway Commission (now the Wisconsin Department of Transportation), the first edition of “Wisconsin’s Official State Highway Map” was printed for public distribution. The first few map publications served primarily as a guide of the state trunk network to both residents and visitors of the state and sold for 10 cents per copy. By the 1930s, maps were distributed for free to the public, included a new emphasis on road safety, and enhanced promotion of state travel and tourism, enticing both residents and visitors to enjoy the great amenities Wisconsin offered. Tourism promotion is evidenced by maps adding catchy themes and slogans, Governor’s welcome messages, new map data, inviting articles, captivating photos, and engaging advertisements. Until the mid-1980s a new edition of the map was printed almost annually, keeping the public informed of how the transportation

system continued to expand and improve statewide (*Table 1*). Now, the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) is pleased to provide a complete archive of the [Wisconsin’s Official State Highway Map](#) to the public. This collection serves as a time capsule of Wisconsin history, teaching us more than the orientation of our roads and highways.

Table 1: Print years for new editions of the Wisconsin highway map by decade.

1910s	1920s	1930s	1940s	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s	2010s
—	1920	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	—	2000	2010
—	1921	1931	1941	1951	1961	1971	—	1991	2001	—
—	1922	1932	1942	1952	1962	1972	1982	—	—	—
—	1923	1933	1943	1953	1963	1973	1983	1993	2003	2013
—	1924	1934	—	1954	1964	1974	1984	—	2004	—
—	1925	1935	1945	1955	1965	1975	—	1995	—	2015
—	1926	1936	1946	1956	1966	1976	—	—	2006	—
—	1927	1937	1947	1957	1967	—	1987	1997	2007	2017
1918	1928	1938	1948	1958	1968	1978	—	—	2008	—
1919	—	1939	1949	1959	1969	—	1989	1999	—	2019

ROAD SAFETY ON THE MAP

The current state highway map shows all modes of travel (by land, air or water) but the primary focus of earlier maps was travel by road. With affordability of cars growing in the early 1900s, the need for a connected road network became increasingly more desirable. In 1916, the Federal Aid Road Act provided funds to develop paved roads. And by 1918, Wisconsin was the first state to develop its own uniform highway classification and numbering system to better organize the growing number of highways in the state. This system would become the foundation for a nationwide system. By 1927, the U.S. Highway numbering system was created, replacing the Wisconsin system as shown on that year’s official state highway map (*Figure 1*). Along with the new highway numbering, the map unveiled new markers for U.S., state and county highways (*Figure 2*), mostly still recognized today.

By the 1940s, family road trips were common, and the 1950s and 1960s brought even greater expansions to the state highway system. More vehicles meant more traffic and subsequently, more incidents. The State Highway Commission responded by promoting Wisconsin’s road rules and road safety on the official highway map; since it was popular with travelers, they were likely to see the new messages. On the 1932 map, “Important Motor Vehicle

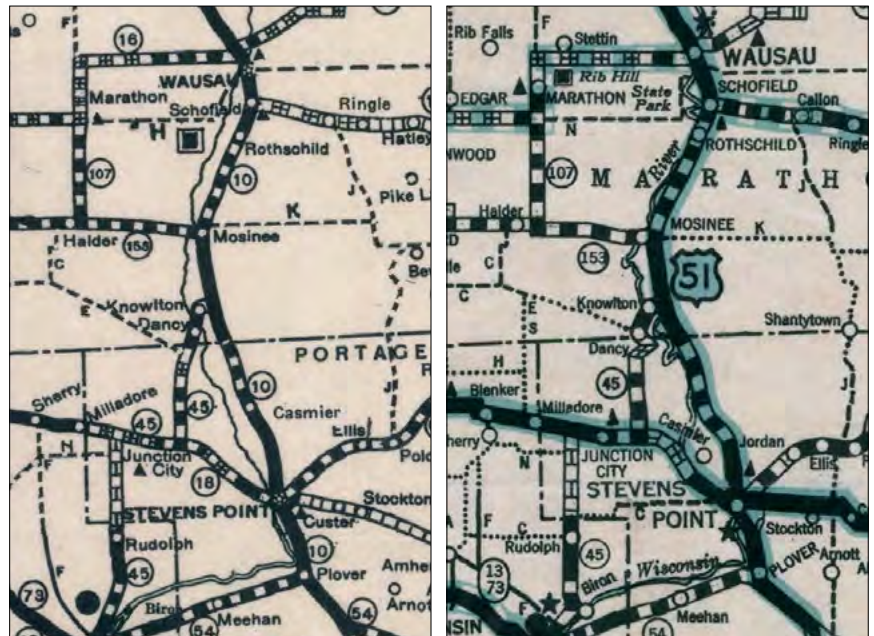


Figure 1: Part of Portage and Marathon counties on the 1926 highway map (left) and 1927 highway map (right) showing a change from Wisconsin’s state trunk highway numbering system to the U.S. highway numbering system used today.



Figure 2: The new U.S. Highway numbering system and marker shields are first advertised on the 1927 state highway map.

Laws of Wisconsin,” also known as the “Rules of the Road,” were first added (**Figure 3**). There were initially five rules printed, number one being, “There is no speed limit on rural highways. Be reasonable and drive carefully. It is unlawful for any person



Figure 3: Important motor vehicle laws of Wisconsin, aka “Rules of the Road,” are first printed on the 1932 Wisconsin state highway map.

to drive in a reckless manner or at such speed as to endanger the lives or property of others.” By 1941, “Rules of the Road” were replaced with an “Obey Traffic Laws” section, where drivers were reminded, “A conviction of hit and run, operating under the influence of liquor, or reckless driving requires automatic revocation of your license” (**Figure 4**). This was a time when Wisconsin did not post speed limits on the “open road,” but excessive speeds could be “construed as reckless driving.” Motorists were also reminded via the map that police patrolled the highways and drivers involved were required

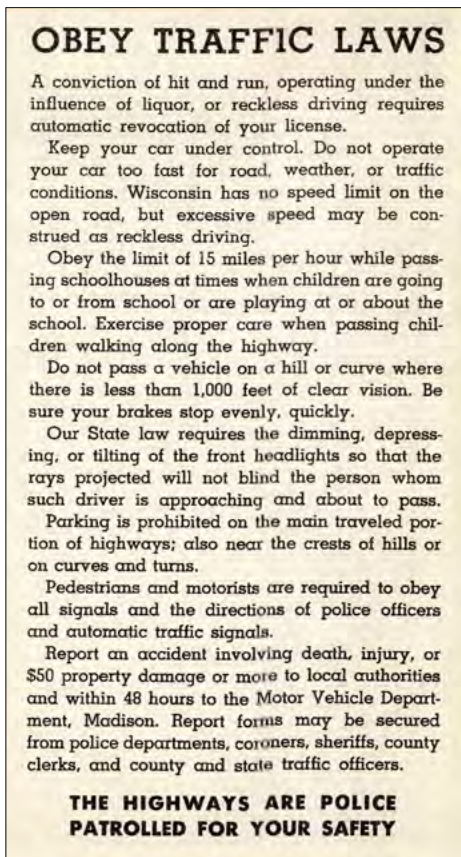


Figure 4: Obey Traffic Laws is first printed on the 1941 state highway map.

to report a crash both locally and to the state Motor Vehicle Department (**Figure 5**).

Further evidence of road safety continued to emerge on other editions of the highway map. In 1973, the back of the map advertised a nationwide program to “make all highway marking and signing uniform, as well as more understandable, so we all may have an even better opportunity to travel safely in Wisconsin and the other 49 states.” All highway signs would be updated by 1976, and the public was reminded that the “no-no” signs showed a forbidden activity behind the now commonplace red circle with a diagonal slash (**Figure 6**).

The 1970-1973 highway maps reminded travelers to buckle up for safety, before seat belt wear became mandatory in 1987. However, in 1987 the mandatory seat belt law fell under secondary enforcement, meaning you couldn’t be pulled over just for not wearing a seat belt. Furthermore, the law wasn’t mentioned on the state highway map until the 1993-1994 edition with a reminder that “Wisconsin buckles up” and a summary of enforcement for both adult seat belts and child safety seats. The law would change again on June 30, 2009, when Wisconsin adopted its current primary enforcement seat belt law. Primary enforcement now allowed police to stop and ticket a driver for not wearing a seat belt, just like any other routine traffic violation. The 2010 highway map advertised WisDOT’s “Click It or Ticket” campaign, with a new reminder to “Buckle Up – It’s the Law.” That same year, the highway map first promoted 511 Wisconsin Travel Info, a resource that provides travelers with information about work zones, lane closures, incidents, road conditions, roadside services, and more.

On recent editions of the official state highway map, motorists are still reminded to travel safely on Wisconsin roads. This has included safety reminders to move over or slow down in work zones, passing emergency vehicles, or proceeding through bad weather. Avoid major distractions such as use of cell phones, eating or other activities that divert your eyes from the road. Focus on driving and arrive alive.

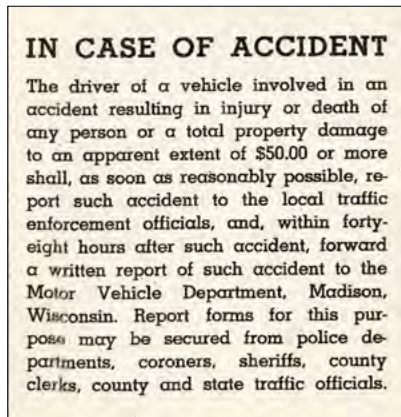


Figure 5: In Case of Accident message as it appeared on the 1941 Wisconsin state highway map.



Figure 6: Example of a “no-no” sign showing forbidden activity on the 1973 Wisconsin state highway map.

GOVERNOR MESSAGES CAPTURE WISCONSIN HISTORY

In addition to motor vehicle safety, the state highway maps also string together other pieces of Wisconsin's past. Some of the more interesting history shown on the highway maps is captured in the longstanding tradition of a printed Governor's welcome message. The first Governor's message, "Welcome to The Badger State," was printed in 1930 from Governor Walter J. Kohler and included the opening, "Wisconsin is famed both as a state of

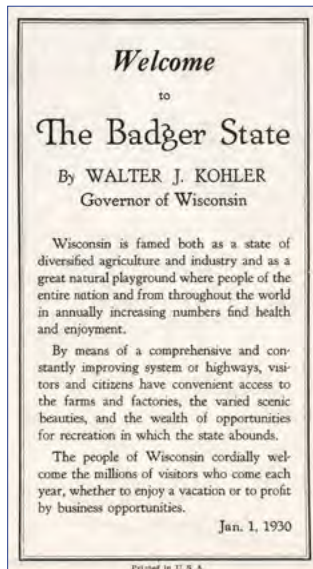


Figure 7: The first Governor's welcome message appeared on the 1930 Wisconsin State Highway Map.

diversified agriculture and industry and as a great natural playground where people of the entire nation and from throughout the world in annually increasing numbers find health and enjoyment." (Figure 7). Subsequent governors continued to sign welcome messages until the 2003-2004 edition (except 1983-1987 under Governor Tony Earl). These messages touch on history about Wisconsin industry, communities, traditions, recreation, expansion, and even war.

Wisconsin Governor's messages through the 1930s more notably mention the expanding highway system, agriculture, outdoor recreation, and friendly citizens. Multiple governors mentioned Wisconsin's natural wonders including the many lakes and rivers, opportunities for fish and game, state parks, forests, and rolling hills. To access these destinations, the state's highway system continued expanding. By 1937, Governor Philip La Follette claimed Wisconsin's highway system was "one of the best in the nation." During travel, visitors could also expect friendliness and friendship from Wisconsin hosts.

The 1930s also brought a related tradition to the state highway map. Governor Julius P. Heil was the first to include a photo with his welcome message (1939). All subsequent governors have continued the tradition of a photo except those published during Tony Earl's term from 1983 to 1987, who opted not to appear. Along with the governor, spouses, children, and most recently the state's lieutenant governor have also been included. Today, the gubernatorial election remains a major factor for determining when to print and distribute a new edition of the state highway map.

From the 1940s through the 1960s, Wisconsin governors continued to entice travelers with their welcome message. In the early 1940s, the map was a reminder that Wisconsin was America's Dairyland and Great Lakes country. Even in 1942, during World War II, Governor Heil suggested more Americans would prefer to explore their own country, and Wisconsin could be that destination. Travelers could expect over 80,000 miles of marked highways through the land of "milk and honey," ranked first in the production of milk and cheese. To close out the decade in 1959, Gaylord Nelson invited the public to enjoy baseball's

Milwaukee Braves or football's Green Bay Packers as well as sailing, iceboating, skiing and waterskiing. A couple years later, in 1961, his welcome message directly mentioned to the map in hand, "this is more than just a highway map. It is a catalog of pleasure and beauty, a directory of business and profit" (Figure 8).

He continues, "This map can lead you to fine restaurants, to hospitable resorts, to scenes of historical interest. It can lead you to bustling, industrious communities, to well-kept, efficient farms, to friendly people. Business is pleasurable in Wisconsin." Governor John Reynolds also referred to the map in his 1963 welcome message, "this map will serve you in many ways for it is more than just a highway map. It is a directory of unparalleled recreational opportunity in a state known as a leader in conservation of its natural resources." That same year, the 1963 map brought back Wisconsin's nickname, reminding travelers that Wisconsin was "The Playground of the Middle West."

From the 1970s and on, Governor's messages continued to welcome travelers but also emphasized safety and conservation. Governor Patrick Lucey even suggested a transportation slogan for the state, "Highways are brought to you through the courtesy of the people of Wisconsin" (1973). He also said Wisconsin highways "knit together a remarkable array of educational, industrial and agricultural assets" and roadtrippers could expect to access "one of the finest systems of waysides and rest areas in the nation" (1973). Fuel conservation was stressed from 1978-1982 which included a message from Governor Lee Sherman Dreyfus that the map was "especially important in this era of energy constraints" and encouraged both travelers and businesses to find the shortest routes and use energy-efficient travel during ideal times so there would be "fuel for all reasons in all seasons" (Figure 9).



Figure 8: Governor Gaylord Nelson welcome message on the 1961 state highway map.

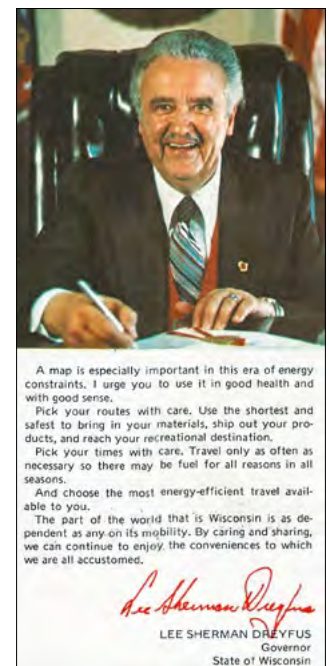


Figure 9: Welcome message from Governor Lee Sherman Dreyfus on the 1982 Wisconsin state highway map.

During his terms, Governor Tommy Thompson continued to remind everyone to drive safely, and keep coming back.

Some governors' welcomes included facts about Wisconsin such as the number of lakes or miles of rivers or highways. One fact in particular, the total number of Wisconsin's lakes, proved an interesting challenge as reported in these messages. Starting in 1941, Governor Heil first welcomed travelers to the more than 7,000 lakes in the state. Shortly after, Governor Oscar Rennebohm increased that number to 7,500 (1947). By 1959, Governor Gaylord Nelson would increase the total again, welcoming travelers to Wisconsin's 9,000 lakes. But by 1967, Governor Warren Knowles decreased the reported number of lakes in the state to somewhere just above 8,600. One year later, Knowles would increase that number to 8,800, and by 1969 he just stopped putting a number in the welcome message. Today, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources reports at least 15,000 inland lakes.

Our most recent governors have not included a written welcome message, but their photos illustrate Wisconsin. Through graphic communication, they have welcomed travelers to see the arts, festivals, sporting events, industry, and scenic Wisconsin parks.

MAP'S CREATIVE BACK SIDE MARKS HISTORY AND PROMOTES TOURISM

Other parts of Wisconsin's state highway map also have a long history. 1930 was the first year the map was printed with a back side (creative side) full of text, tourism images, road sign interpretation, and highway information. Short articles titled "Scenic Wisconsin" (1930-1935) and "Wisconsin State Parks (and State Forests)" (1930-1943) tempt travelers to explore all parts of the state such as the northern lakes, rushing rivers, rolling hills, unique bluffs, prairies, forests, and driftless areas. The 1930 map also provided evidence that Wisconsin operated up to 27 fish hatcheries stocking over 300 million fish in Wisconsin waters to assure anglers "perpetual enjoyment." To get around, travelers could expect roads that were "one long succession of curves, ascending and descending." In the "Land O'Lakes," you could expect more lakes than was possible to put on the highway map, a challenge still faced by modern cartographers. On the east side, the long arm of Wisconsin is acclaimed as cherry-land, a contrast to describing the industrial cities of Milwaukee, Racine and Kenosha. Eight state parks were listed in the 1920 highway map booklet totaling just under 15,000 acres. By 1950, 24 state parks were listed totaling 16,220 acres. State Parks, Recreation Areas, and Forests are still shown on the highway map today as they have remained popular destinations for travelers (Figure 10).

Name	Location and State Highway Connection	Dominant Features	Swim- ing	Camp- ing	Elec- trical Outlets	Store	Address of Park or Forest Manager	Water Frontage	Number of Acres	Picnic Area
SCENIC PARKS										
BRUNET ISLAND	1 mi. W. of Cornell T.H. 27	River Island Park	Yes	Yes	No	Nearby	Cornell	Chippewa River	179	Yes
COPPER FALLS	4 mi. N. of Mellen, T.H. 13		No	Yes	No	In Park	Mellen	Bad River—Tyler's Fork	1,200	Yes
DEVIL'S LAKE	3 mi. S. of Baraboo, T.H. 123	River gorge, water falls, canyons	Yes	Yes	Yes	In Park	Baraboo	Devil's Lake	2,220	Yes
INTERSTATE	St. Croix Falls, T.H. 8	Bluffs, mountain scenery	Yes	Yes	Yes	Nearby	St. Croix Falls	St. Croix River	581	Yes
MERRICK	1 mi. N. of Fountain City, T.H. 35	River gorge, rocky bluffs	Yes	Yes	No	Nearby	Fountain City	Miss. River	124	Yes
PATTISON	10 mi. S. of Superior T.H. 35	A river park	Yes	Yes	No	In Park	Superior	Bad River, Interfalls Lake	1,160	Yes
PENINSULA	Fish Creek, T.H. 42	Green Bay, limestone bluffs	Yes	Yes	No	Nearby	Fish Creek	Green Bay	3,640	Yes
PERROT	1 mi. N. of Trempealeau, T.H. 35	River scenery, wooded bluffs	No	Yes	No	Nearby	Trempealeau	Miss. River	937	Yes
POTAWATOMI	2 mi. NW of Sturgeon Bay, T.H. 42	Sturgeon Bay, limestone bluffs	No	Yes	No	Nearby	Sturgeon Bay	Sturgeon Bay	1,046	Yes
RIB MOUNTAIN	4 mi. SW of Wausau, T.H. 51	Highest point in state, rock outcrops	No	Yes	No	Nearby	Wausau	None	494	Yes
TERRY ANDRAE	4 mi. S. of Sheboygan, T.H. 141	Lake Michigan, sand dunes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Nearby	Sheboygan	Lake Michigan	167	Yes
WYALUSING	4 mi. S. of Prairie du Chien, T.H. 35	Junc. Wis. and Miss. Rivers, wooded bluffs and valleys	No	Yes	No	Nearby	Wyalusing	Miss. River	1,671	Yes
HISTORICAL-MEMORIAL PARKS										
CUSHING	Delafield, T.H. 30	Historic shaft	No	Yes	No	Nearby	Eagle	Bark River	10	Yes
FIRST CAPITOL	3 mi. N. of Belmont, T.H. 151	First territorial capitol	No	No	No	Nearby	Belmont	None	2	Yes
NELSON DEWEY	1 mi. N. of Cassville, T.H. 35	Home of 1st governor, river bluffs and valleys	No	Yes	No	Nearby	Cassville	Miss. River	720	Yes
TOWER HILL	3 mi. S. of Spring Green, T.H. 14	Historic shot tower, river bluffs	No	Yes	No	Nearby	Spring Green	Wis. River	108	Yes
ROADSIDE PARKS										
CASTLE MOUND	1 mi. S. of Black River Falls, T.H. 12	Roadside bluffs	No	Yes	No	Nearby	Black River Falls	None	222	Yes
MILL BLUFF	4 mi. W. of Camp Douglas, T.H. 12 and 16	Rocky bluff	Yes	Yes	No	Nearby	Black River Falls	Roadside Pond	56	Yes
NEW GLARUS WOODS	1 mi. S. of New Glarus, T.H. 49	Wooded valleys	No	Yes	No	Nearby	New Glarus	None	43	Yes
OJIBWA	1 mi. E. of Ojibwa, T.H. 70	River scenery	No	Yes	No	Nearby	Ojibwa	Chippewa River	353	Yes
ROCKY ARBOR	1 mi. NW of Wis. Dells, T.H. 12	Rocky ledges, wooded valley	No	Yes	No	Nearby	Wis. Dells	None	227	Yes
STATE FORESTS										
AMERICAN LEGION	Onesida Co., T.H. 47	Inland lakes, wooded terrain	Yes	Yes	No	Nearby	Trout Lake	Many glacial lakes	37,189	Yes
BRULE RIVER	Douglas Co., T.H. 2	River scenery	Yes	Yes	No	Nearby	Brule	Brule River	16,884	Yes
COUNCIL GROUNDS	1 mi. W. of Merrill, Lincoln Co., T.H. 51	Pine woods, river scenery	Yes	Yes	No	Nearby	Merrill	Wis. River	278	Yes
FLAMBEAU RIVER	Sawyer Co., T.H. 13, 8, 70	Flambeau River, Wilderness Forest, canoeing	No	Yes	No	Nearby	Phillips	Flambeau River	65,485	No
KETTLE MORaine	N. unit—5 mi. N. of Kewaskum, T.H. 55 and 45 S. Unit—4 mi. N. of Eagle, T.H. 59	Glacier formed hills and valleys	Yes	Yes	No	Nearby	Campbellsport	Mauthe Lake	7,558	Yes
NORTHERN HIGHLAND	Vilas and Iron Counties, T.H. 51	Glacier formed hills and valleys	No	Yes	No	Nearby	Eagle	None	4,082	Yes
POINT BEACH	4 mi. N. of Two Rivers, T.H. 42	Glacier formed lakes, wood- ed terrain	Yes	Yes	No	Nearby	Trout Lake	Trout Lake and many other lakes	124,191	Yes
SILVER CLIFF	Marinette Co., T.H. 141	Lake Michigan, sand dunes, pine woods	Yes	Yes	No	Nearby	Two Rivers	Lake Michigan	1,300	Yes
		Sandy pine plain	No	No	No	No	Wausaukee	None	800	No

Figure 10: Wisconsin State Parks and Forests table first printed on the 1947 state highway map detailing the location, amenities, and size of each.

WISCONSIN

THE STATE TOOK ITS NAME FROM THE WISCONSIN RIVER WHICH WAS KNOWN AS THE MESKOUSING OR MISKOUS WHEN WHITE MEN FIRST REACHED THIS REGION. IN FATHER HENRI PITS' NEW DISCOVERY THE NAME IS SPELLLED FOUR WAYS, MESCOSIN, MISKOSIN, MISCOSIN, AND OUSCONSIN. THE LATTER NAME WAS IN COMMON USE DURING THE FRENCH REGIME.

LA CROSSE OF "INDIAN SHINY" WAS PLAYED ON THE PLAIN CITY WHERE THE NOW STANDS.

THE WISCONSIN RIVER ONCE FLOWED THROUGH PRESENT DEVILS LAKE, ROCK & EARTH LEFT BY THE RETREATING GLACIER BLOKED ITS COURSE, FORMED DEVILS LAKE & CAUSED THE RIVER TO TURN EAST FOR A DISTANCE.

THE WINNEBAGO CALLED THIS BLUFF SOAKING MOUNTAIN. THE FRENCH CONTINUED THE NAME IN "LA MONTAGNE QUI TREMPLE A L'EAU" OR THE HILL WHICH SOAKS IN THE WATER. IN 1858 NICHOLAS PERROT BUILT A WINTER REFUGE HERE & IN THE FOLLOWING SPRING HE ERECTED FT. ATANTIC AT LAKE PEPI WHERE HE CARRIED ON A PROFITABLE FUR TRADE WITH THE SHIWA.

THE MILITARY ROAD BUILT 1835-38 CONNECTING LINK BETWEEN THE 3 WISCONSIN FORTS, FLEHOWARD - GREEN BAY, FLEWINNEBAGO PORTAGE & FLE CRAWFORD - PRAIRIE DU CHIEN.

THE FIRST SETTLER AT THE SITE OF MILWAUKEE WAS SOLOMON JUNEAU WHO, WITH HIS FAMILY, HAD UNDISTURBED POSSESSION FROM 1818 TO 1835 - A YAMHSEE VILLAGE DEVELOPED WHICH GREW INTO A CITY PREDOMINANTLY GERMAN &&& MILWAUKEE WAS WISCONSIN'S LARGEST PORTAL FOR THE HORDES OF IMMIGRANTS. HERE THE JOURNEY BY BOAT ENDED AND THAT BY HORSE & WAGON WAS BEGUN &&& IN A CULTURAL WAY, ESPECIALLY IN MUSIC AND DRAMA, MILWAUKEE WAS AN EARLY LEADER.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT IS DUE: DR. LOUISE R. KELLOGG - HISTORIAN MR. CHARLES E. BROWN - ARCHEOLOGIST MISS ALICE E. SMITH - HISTORIAN



PICTORIAL HISTORY OF WISCONSIN

Figure 11: A Pictorial History of Wisconsin was first printed on the 1932 state highway map.

The 1932 creative side was largely a “Pictorial History of Wisconsin” presented as a cartoon map (**Figure 11**). The upper right corner briefly describing how Wisconsin was named, claiming it descended from the native American word for the Wisconsin River. The map is split into regions, each with short captions of Wisconsin history and geography going back to the 17th century. History included snippets of early exploration and immigration, military presence, trade, mining, and settlement. Well known geographic features were placed accordingly such as Copper Falls, Pattison State Park, Rib Hill, Blue Mounds, and Holy Hill. The “Pictorial History of Wisconsin” was used through 1935 on the highway map.

In early editions of the map, the creative side mainly showed Wisconsin destinations focused on summer travel. Familiar Wisconsin sites such as Devil’s Lake, Dell’s bluffs, or northern lakes, and popular activities such as sailing, hunting, fishing, and more have regularly been pictured. It wasn’t until 1941 that winter recreation in Wisconsin first made a minor appearance, showing a cross country skier and wintery river scene. The Mt. Valhalla ski jump facility was pictured in 1942. Other mentions of winter fun sporadically appeared over the next few decades. Snowmobiling, another popular winter activity, was first pictured in 1987.

Winter wasn’t the only season to gain attention on the creative side. The 1967 highway map advertised the state as a “four seasons vacationland,” suggesting the state as a destination any time of year. This was followed by a 1969 theme marking Wisconsin as a “year ‘round playground.” Most recently, the map theme promoted Wisconsin as “a state for all seasons” which pictured winter parasailing with snowmobiles, spring fishing, summer hot air balloons, and fall horseback riding (**Figure 12**).



Figure 12: Parasailing behind snowmobiles is pictured on the 1993 Wisconsin state highway map.

Other significant history was also captured on the creative side of highway maps. In 1965, the proposed and completed segments of the “Interstate Highway System” for the continental United States were prominently advertised. When completed as first directed by the U.S. Congress in 1956, the country would have a completed 41,000-mile “National System of Interstate and Defense Highways” numbered as we know them today. To mark the new routes, the American Association of State Highway Officials designed the interstate shield, differentiating

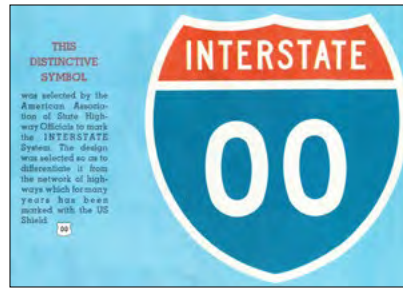


Figure 13: The American Association of State Highway Officials interstate marker symbol, printed on the 1965 Wisconsin state highway map.

it from state and U.S. highway routes (**Figure 13**). The 1968 creative again spotlighted transportation, marking it “the key to progress.” That year also marked and celebrated 50 years of state highway mapping, boasting improvements to the map including “additional route markings, symbols for wayside or public facilities, and accurate designations of roadway surfaces” (**Figure 14**). Accompanying photos showed various modes of transportation including air travel, railroads, car ferries, school buses, ships, and even a horse-drawn carriage.

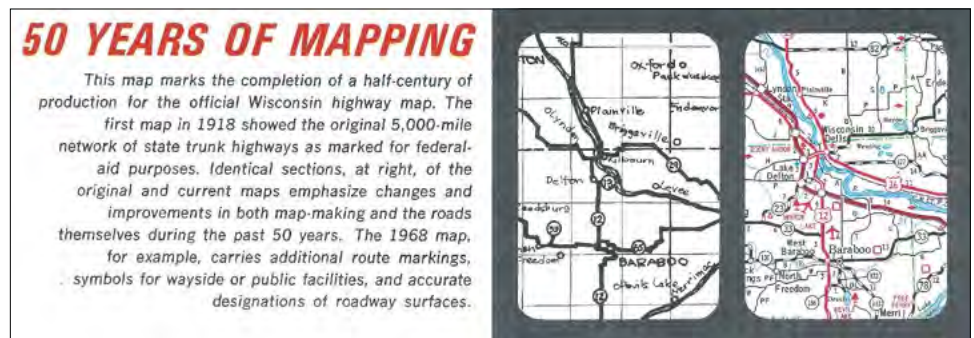


Figure 14: 50 years of mapping was celebrated on the 1968 Wisconsin state highway map.

At the center of this progress were Wisconsin highways, which were said to “unite the rails, harbors and modern airports into a thriving, comprehensive transportation system.”



Figure 15: Inset map for Green Bay and vicinity from the 1978-1979 Wisconsin state highway map.

Fond du Lac, Manitowoc, Sheboygan, Janesville, Wausau, Stevens Point, Madison, Waukesha, Milwaukee, Racine, and Kenosha. The Ashland and Marinette insets were eventually removed, and Manitowoc was added later. Inset maps provide a large-scale view and allow for more detail of an area, including some of the local roads and labeled points of interest (**Figure 15**).

Inset maps first appeared on the front side of the highway map in 1927, but moved to the back side by 1946, blending with other creative content. That first year, inset maps were drawn for Superior, Ashland, Marinette, Eau Claire, La Crosse, Beloit, Green Bay, Appleton, Oshkosh,

play in Wisconsin” (2001). While many great slogans and catch phrases have been used, those with long-standing runs are more memorable to map enthusiasts.

DATA ON THE MAP: THEN AND NOW

The first few editions of the state highway map did not include the same, extensive map data shown today. Early versions included basic information such as state and county boundaries, distinguishable lakes and rivers, and community points with labels. Map features were so obvious to the reader they didn't require an explanation or inclusion on the map legend. In addition, explanations for state highways; principal routes; state parks, public camping, and highway commission offices were shown. Some redesign to the map and legend in 1935 added more detail and new data such as fish hatcheries, some Indian Reservations, state and federal institutions, state and national forests, community population ranges, and lookout towers (Figure 16). By 1950, waysides, airports, railroads, forest ranger stations, county seats, car ferries, public hunting and fishing grounds, and some schools and colleges were on the map.

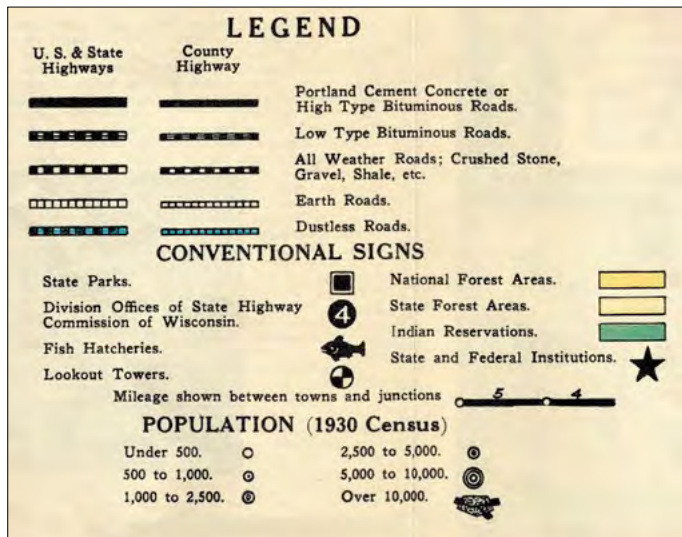


Figure 16: Legend printed on the 1935 Wisconsin state highway map, a redesign from prior map editions.

Highway map data has also been removed over the years. Road surface types (e.g., cement or concrete, bituminous, gravel, bare earth) were delineated on older maps which tracked the progress of paving gravel and bare earth roads as funded by the Federal Highway Aid Act of 1916 (Figure 17). In some respects, this made the map an accountability tool, showing Wisconsin's citizens where highway development progress was occurring. Some data that was likely difficult to maintain or show accurately has also been pulled off such as lookout towers, public hunting and fishing grounds, and picnic grounds. Locations of Native American earthworks and villages were removed from the highway map by 1922, and WisDOT's current practice redacts archaeological sites from public documents including maps. Other map data including forest ranger stations, seaplane bases, proposed highways, and detour routes, have also been removed. Although it was not documented why some of these data layers were removed, one might speculate the information was no longer deemed necessary, changed too frequently, no longer fit, or was too sensitive.

In the current edition of state highway map, more than 50 layers of information are shown on the map figure or in a supporting table (Figure 18, page 10). Notable map features include highways, communities, Indian reservations, hospitals, lakes, rivers, parks, forests, campgrounds, historic sites, hospitals, higher education, institutions, all oriented in Wisconsin's 72 county boundaries and portions of the surrounding states: Minnesota, Iowa, Illinois, and Michigan. Some layers serve in a supporting role, showing what's near you, where you can travel, other transportation modes (railroads, airports, ferries, and state trails) or places to stop along the way (rest areas, waysides).

Updating the Wisconsin State Highway Map is a huge undertaking. More notable data that gets updated includes highways and interchanges, community boundaries, community populations, rest areas, waysides, state parks, state trails, railroads, hospitals, colleges, Indian reservations, ferries, airports, historic sites, Veterans sites, memorial bridges and memorial highways. The WisDOT Digital Cartography Unit works closely with numerous WisDOT business areas and other state agencies such as the Department of Natural Resources, Department of Health Services, University of Wisconsin System, Department of Corrections, and the Department of Tourism to receive updated data for map updates. A complete list of map data is detailed in Table 3 (page 11).

Up until the 1987-1988 map edition, WisDOT produced the map using scribe sheets and scribing techniques. Each unique color shown on the map had its own scribe sheet, and features could be erased by recoating the sheet with a special liquid. Once erased, new features could be rescribed by hand, a very time-consuming process. Each scribe sheet was used to create a press plate, then each color



Figure 17: The 1969 map legend features data such as road surface types, lookout towers, and public hunting and fishing grounds that are no longer shown on the current Wisconsin state highway map.

was aligned and pressed on top of each other to generate the final map, a printing process still used today.

For the 1987-1988 edition, the map was fully digitized in a computer-aided drafting (CAD) software program. The previous printed version of the map was scanned and digitized to provide the framework for the new computer-generated product. Feature and markings were traced, and digital marker symbols and fonts were used to display the array of map layers, tables, labels, and messaging. Computers made it easier to edit the map, back up and store records, and share digital files.

Another major redesign of the map occurred with the 1993-1994 edition. More noticeable changes were made to the map legend, map grid, feature symbology, north arrow, and supporting tables and figures. Some of the bolder colors were toned down, the magenta border grid turned to a subtle grey, and the cyan color of the lakes was faded into a lighter blue. The legend was combined back into one box with sub headers differentiating principal through routes from other routes. The lines for county borders and road routes were thinned, evening out the overall appearance. While the map width remained almost the same at 26 inches, the height increased by several inches, moving the Index to Incorporated Cities and Villages down to its current place under the map figure. In 2003, an extra panel and fold were added to expand the current Index to Cities and Villages which includes all unincorporated communities shown on the map figure.

The current highway map is still designed in CAD software, but WisDOT is planning to modernize and redesign the map in 2025

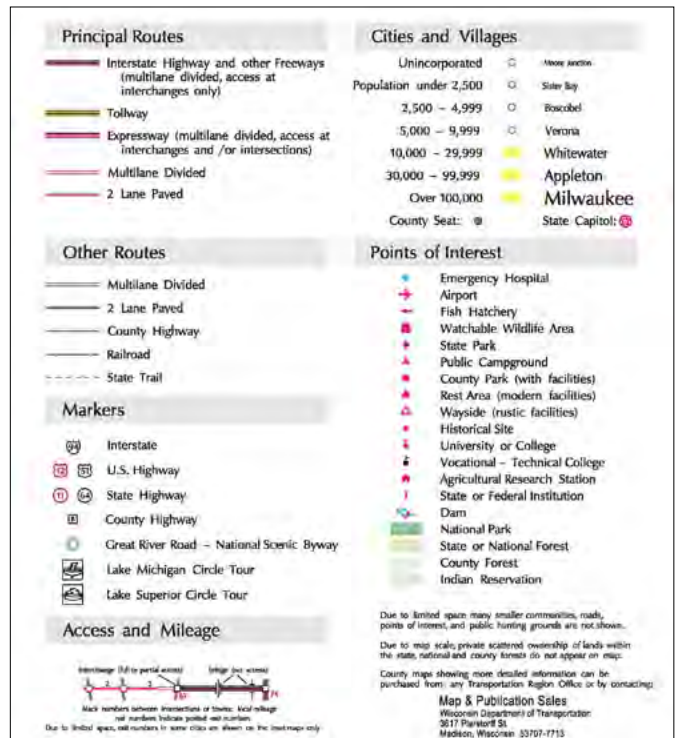


Figure 18: The 2019-2020 Wisconsin state highway map legend.

using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) software. This will allow the data on the map to be shared more easily, and likely simplify how the map is constructed and edited going forward.

SUMMARY

The primary purpose of the official state highway map remains to show Wisconsin's state highway system and other main highways and features that "seem desirable" to include [statute 84.02(5)]. On the 1989-1990 edition, a list of Veterans Memorial Highways was added, followed by Memorial Bridges in the late 1990s as a requirement of state statute. Today, all Veteran Memorial Highway and Bridge designations must be identified along with the Wisconsin 9/11 Memorial Highway. Information about child safety restraint systems is also required now, as written in statute 347.48(4). In addition to these statutory requirements, many other map features have been added over the years to provide a wealth of information to the Wisconsin traveler. More than a century of changes can now be seen in arguably the most complete digital collection of the map. The archive provides the public an opportunity to easily explore, research, share, or reprint its favorites.

Wisconsin law requires folded state highway maps be distributed for free to the public, and an allotment of each new edition is delivered by WisDOT to each officer and member of the legislature. The allotment includes 50 highway service maps (currently laminated wall posters), and 500 folded highway maps. In addition, 300 folded maps are delivered to the Wisconsin Legislative Reference Bureau. Except for these legislative allotments, WisDOT is required to charge for non-folded highway service maps at a price not less

than cost. Service maps are single-sided, no-fold copies of the map's front side and are intended to be displayed as a wall poster. Current product offerings can be purchased through the Department of Administration's [Document Sales website](#) and include laminated and paper copies.

In a time when smartphone apps and GPS seem to dominate road travel, there is still something familiar about seeing the entire state highway network laid out on the map. The State Highway Map remains one of WisDOT's most popular products, bridging generations of travelers, commuters and residents to share a common bond through exploring our state. Demand for the printed map remains high with almost half a million copies distributed annually through the Wisconsin Department of Tourism, visitor centers, rest areas, gas stations, and other businesses and organizations throughout the state. Distribution has slowed since 2020 due to the global pandemic and supply shortages in the print industry, but WisDOT continues to fill map requests from individuals and businesses. Ordering instructions can be found at [Wisconsin Department of Transportation Official Wisconsin State Highway Map \(wisconsindot.gov\)](#).

The next edition of Wisconsin's State Highway Map will be published in 2023. The public can expect to get the new map in advance of the summer travel season.



Data and content referenced in this report was sourced from decades of state highway maps (1918–2020) and [WisDOT's Transportation Timeline](#).

This report was assembled by the WisDOT Division of Transportation System Development, Bureau of Technical Services and written by Christine Koeller, Cartographic Specialist in the Surveying and Mapping section. The report was prepared for publication by the WisDOT Office of Public Affairs.

Table 3: Current map layers and descriptions for Wisconsin's Official State Highway Map.

LAYER	DESCRIPTION
Principal Routes	Principal routes show a generally preferred route of travel between communities and include interstate highways, other freeways, expressways, multi-lane divided, and two-lane paved highways. Markers delineate interstate, U.S. Highway and State Highway routes. Some tollways in Illinois are also shown.
Other Routes	Other road routes include U.S., State or County highways in the following categories: Multi-lane Divided, Two-Lane Paved or County Highway.
Interchange	Indicates a partial or full interchange between two highways. Generally shown between an interstate or U.S. highway and other highway routes.
Highway Markers	Highway marker symbols distinguish between Interstate, U.S. Highway, State Highway, and County Highway routes.
Exit Number	Posted exit numbers along interstate highways.
Railroad	Active railroad corridors.
Great River Road – National Scenic Byway	This National Scenic Byway follows highways near and along the Mississippi River starting at the U.S. – Canada border down to the Gulf Coast.
Lake Michigan Circle Tour	The mainline tour follows state highways on or near Lake Michigan as it borders Wisconsin and surrounding states.
Lake Superior Circle Tour	The mainline tour follows state highways on or near Lake Superior as it borders Wisconsin and surrounding states.
Mileage between intersections or towns	When space allows, highway mileage between two intersections or two communities is shown in black text.
Unincorporated communities	Communities that are not incorporated villages or cities but still serve as a destination and point of reference during travel. Not all unincorporated communities can be shown on the state highway map due to limited space or other factors.
Cities and Villages (polygon areas)	U.S. Census data is used to report populations for cities and villages on both the map and corresponding index. Cities or villages with a population of 10,000 or more have their municipal boundary shaded in yellow. Municipal boundaries are also shown on city inset maps.
Cities and Villages (points and labels)	Incorporated communities as verified in the Municipal Data System (Wisconsin Department of Administration). Communities with a population less than 10,000 (U.S. Census) are shown as a point. Label size varies by population range.
County Seat	The governmental center of each county as listed in the Wisconsin Blue Book, part four: Statistics and reference, population and political subdivisions. County seats are shown on the map and denoted in the Index to Cities and Villages.
Emergency hospital	Emergency hospitals are listed in the Wisconsin Department of Health Services hospital directory. Hospitals are identified on the front and back of the map as well as the Cities and Villages index.
Airport	Airport reference points are provided by WisDOT's Bureau of Aeronautics. Only public airports are shown on the map.
Fish Hatchery or Spawning Facility	Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources' (WI DNR) Bureau of Fisheries Management provides a list of fish propagation or spawning facilities shown on the map. Local or private facilities are not shown.
Wildlife Viewing Area	Formerly listed as watchable wildlife areas. These are locations along state highways where wildlife viewing area signs are placed. The WisDOT Bureau of Traffic Operations-Traffic Design Unit keeps an inventory of these road sign locations.
State Park	Provided in the WI DNR Managed Properties and property names data table with a program code of "PR".
State Trail	Provided by WI DNR as the Wisconsin State Trails (PR DISS STATE TRAIL LN 24K) data layer.
Public Campground	Publicly accessible campgrounds from various local, county or state data sources. This data can be difficult to acquire and may not be up-to-date with the most current information.
County Park (with facilities)	County parks are provided by each of Wisconsin's 72 counties. This data can be difficult to acquire and may not be up to date with the most current information.
Rest Area (modern facilities)	WisDOT's Division of Transportation System Development/Bureau of Highway Maintenance/Roadside Facilities Unit maintains locations of rest areas which are equipped with modern facilities and amenities that generally include indoor restrooms with flushable toilets. Rest areas are open year-round.
Wayside (rustic facilities)	WisDOT's Division of Transportation System Development/Bureau of Highway Maintenance/Roadside Facilities Unit maintains locations of waysides which are more rustic than Rest Areas. Waysides may or may not have restrooms, running water, or other amenities. Most are operated seasonally from May to September.
Historic Site	A list of Statewide Historic Sites is provided by the Wisconsin Historical Society's Division of Museums and Historic Sites. As of today, there were 11 active sites shown on the map and in a table.
University or College	Both private and public Universities are shown on the map as space allows. Data is gathered from various sources.

Table 3 continued on page 12

Table 3: Current map layers and descriptions for Wisconsin's Official State Highway Map.

(continued from page 11)

LAYER	DESCRIPTION
Vocational – Technical College	Both private and public technical colleges or vocational schools are shown on the map as space allows. Data is gathered from various sources.
Agricultural Research Station	Agricultural Research Stations operated by the University of Wisconsin-Madison.
State or Federal Institution	Wisconsin Department of Corrections adult and juvenile facilities along with mental health institutions provided by the Wisconsin Department of Health Services.
Dam	Provided by WI DNR as the Wisconsin Repository of Dams data layer.
National Park	Boundaries managed by the National Park Service.
State Forest	Provided in the WI DNR Managed Properties and property names data table with a program code of “SF” or “NF”.
National Forest	U.S. Forest Service Administrative Forest Boundaries managed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service.
County Forest	WI DNR’s Division of Forestry provides a County Forest data set which includes county lands defined in Wisconsin Statute Chapter 77.
County Boundary	A generalized representation of county boundaries provided by WI DNR.
Indian Reservation	Bureau of Indian Affairs Tribal Land data. Only reservation property types are shown.
Amtrak Station / Connecting Thruway Bus Service	WisDOT’s Division of Transportation Investment Management-Rails and Harbors Section provides locations of Amtrak Stations and Thruway Bus Service stops shown on the Wisconsin Amtrak Station inset map.
Ferry	WisDOT’s Division of Transportation Investment Management-Rails and Harbors Section provides locations of passenger and car ferries.
Lake	Lakes of 100 acres minimum in size qualify for display on the state map when space allows. Lake names are displayed only when sufficient space is available. Data is a subset of WI DNR’s 24K hydrology (open water) layer.
River	Prominent rivers and river names are displayed only when sufficient space is available. Data is a subset of WI DNR’s 24K hydrology (rivers, streams) layer.
WI State Patrol Non-Emergency Assistance	The WisDOT Division of State Patrol region map provides a non-emergency phone number for each WisDOT region.
County Location Index (table)	Identifies the general location of each Wisconsin county on the map.
Wisconsin Veterans Sites (table)	All Wisconsin Veterans sites on the map are listed in Wisconsin State Statute 84.02(5)(d)2.
Mileage Log (table)	The first mileage table appeared in the 1920 official map along with an explanation of its use. The table shows the distance between from city center to city center along State and Federal Highways only. Mileage calculations are approximate and actual ground distances may vary.
Memorial Bridges (table)	Memorial Bridges are listed in Wisconsin state statute 84.101 and shown in a table on the official map.
Memorial Highways (table)	Memorial Highways are listed in Wisconsin state statute 84.101 and shown in a table on the official map.
Latitude/Longitude lines	The 90-degree west longitude line along with the 45-degree and 42-degree 30-minute north latitude lines are shown.
Index to Cities and Villages (table)	Includes the unincorporated communities, cities and villages shown on the map figure along with population, county seat and emergency hospital notations. Wisconsin Towns and Townships are not listed.
WI State Parks, Forests, Recreational Areas (table)	The WI DNR provides data shown on this table to the Department of Tourism for their Wisconsin State Parks Guide. This table starting on page 20 is a source for this highway map table.
State Trails (table)	The WI DNR provides data shown on this table to the Department of Tourism for their Wisconsin State Parks Guide. This table starting on page 20 is a source for this highway map table.
Surrounding states (Minnesota, Iowa, Illinois, and Michigan)	Updates to map information shown for surrounding states are provided and verified by their state Department of Transportation highway map staff.