

Wisconsin Department of Transportation

2024-2029 Local Program Guidelines

Surface Transportation Program (STP)-Urban, STP-Rural, STP-Local and Local Bridge

Effective June 9, 2023

Purpose and Description

These guidelines provide direction for project requests for the Wisconsin Department of Transportation's (WisDOT's) 2024-2029 "Local Program Cycle," defined in this solicitation as the statewide STP-Urban, STP-Rural, STP-Local and Local Bridge programs.

Local improvement projects on connecting highways are not eligible for STP-Urban, STP-Rural, STP-Local 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. See the section called, "Timely Use of Funds," for more information.

There are additional challenges that may impact funding levels for the 2024-2029 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 (CHCs) with summaries of current entitlement balances. An updated application form, specifically developed for the 2024-2029 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:

<http://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. 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. 2020 Census data will be used in the 2024-2029 program cycle.

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. As a result of the 2020 Census, there are five MPOs that budget funds as Transportation Management Areas (TMAs) (Appleton, Green Bay, Madison, Milwaukee, and Round Lake Beach) in Wisconsin.

Wisconsin's urbanized area MPOs receive an annual allocation based on their population. MPOs program all available funds in each program cycle. Funds may not be reserved for cost increases to existing projects. MPOs determine their budgets in cooperation with WisDOT. Except for MPO projects in TMAs, existing projects that were approved in previous program cycles may not request additional funding for those projects through a new program cycle.

The idea is that all urbanized areas must stay within their budgeted funds. Project growth is 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 project 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 to include the project will be necessary. WisDOT regularly updates the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) to reference MPO TIP projects. Once FHWA approves the STIP, projects are authorized for spending.

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, as it has been for over twenty years. WisDOT uses a statewide formula ranking process to distribute funds to communities in urban areas based on eligible centerline mileage. Wisconsin's urban areas have been determined by the 2020 Census data. Applications for projects that are sent to WisDOT and are located in urban areas will be rated and ranked by WisDOT to determine program priorities.

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. WisDOT picks projects from the applications that WisDOT receives.

STP-Rural funds may only be spent outside urban boundary areas, or in rural areas. The current formula generates funding priority based on factors completely outside of urban and urbanized areas. By long-standing department policy, in Wisconsin, CHCs set priorities for STP-Rural funding within their counties. In Wisconsin it is not appropriate for counties to propose the funding of projects within urban boundaries; typically, that is the local sponsors' (city or village) role. It is the CHCs' 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.

STP-Local

The STP-Local Program provides funding to improve roads and streets functionally classified as rural minor collector and local streets. This program developed through a provision in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) which allows states to break out a portion of the STP funding dedicated to adjusted census-defined areas that have a population of 50,000 or lower, for projects located on roadways functionally classified as rural minor collectors and local roads.

WisDOT sets aside 15% of the funds allocated for STP-Rural and STP-Urban in population areas under 50,000 for the STP-Local program. All STP-Local projects must be located wholly outside of Wisconsin urbanized areas.

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.

County highway commissioners establish bridge priorities within their county per [Wisconsin Legislature: Chapter Trans 213](#). In general, 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." If determined it's more cost effective to replace than rehabilitate, WisDOT will consider replacement in cooperation with the local sponsor. 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.

[Wisconsin Legislature: Chapter 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 2023 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 2023 bridge inventory list will be published

and distributed to all CHCs. Contact your CHC 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-business/eng-consultants/cnslt-rsrcs/rdwy/default.aspx>.

3. Cost Share-Local Bridge Program

For bridges that are on roadways on the federal highway system, federal or state funds cover 80 percent of specific individual participating project costs and local funds provide the remaining 20 percent plus any federal or state non-participating items. A provision in the BIL allows WisDOT to fully fund (with 100% federal share) bridges that are on roadways off the federal aid highway system. The “off-system” bridges are on roadways that are functionally classified as local roads or rural minor collectors.

4. State Municipal Agreements (SMAs)-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 2024-2029 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 2024-2029 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 continue 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://wisconsindot.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. All revisions will be discussed with the local sponsor.

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 likely will require coordination with the railroad company at an early stage (sometimes even prior to submitting the project application). Contact the WisDOT Region Railroad Coordinators who are available to assist with coordination and rail-related questions. 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 2015 Wisconsin 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 the FAQ is to provide consistent direction to Department staff, 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). WisDOT, FHWA and locals coordinate on project issues and follow state and federal requirements. Individual project questions can be addressed with WisDOT staff. Coordinate requests with the Regional Oversight Engineer and the Bike/ Pedestrian Coordinator for assistance.

FAQs with information about bicycle and pedestrian accommodations are found on the multimodal projects and studies website:

<http://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, 2024-2029 program cycle projects must be constructed and in final acceptance within six full fiscal years of the project initiation. This rolling sunset policy is described on page one of this document.

In the past, the sunset date was calculated 6-years from the beginning of the program cycle for all projects, regardless of the year the project funding is authorized. This date is referenced as the *Anticipated All Work Complete Date* in the Financial Integrated Improvement Programming System (FIIPS). FIIPS tracks Wisconsin's efforts to plan, schedule, estimate, fund and monitor changes made to highway improvement projects. FIIPS also indicates the *Reimbursement Request End Date* which is calculated by adding 3 years to the sunset date for billing and audits. Years one and two of the 5-year program cycle are typically reserved for design projects. The final 3 years are typically construction projects. Consequently, construction projects authorized for funding in the later years of the program cycle may run into sunset issues. The new process has the sunset dates determined based on the year that the project funding is originally scheduled to be authorized, rather than having all projects within a program cycle having the same sunset date, 6-years from the beginning of the program cycle.

7. 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 high crash histories. 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. Except for MPO projects in TMAs, 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 27, 2023, and February 5, 2024. 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, STP-Local and Local Bridge programs will be developed and approved within the same timeframe.

**WisDOT Schedule
2024-2029 Local Highway Improvement Program**

Program	Project Applications Due to WisDOT	Approved Programs Sent to Regions	Approved Programs Published
STP-Urban	Friday, October 27, 2023	Friday, March 1, 2024	Friday, March 29, 2024
STP-Rural	Friday, October 27, 2023	Friday, March 1, 2024	Friday, March 29, 2024
Local Bridge	Friday, October 27, 2023	Friday, March 1, 2024	Friday, March 29, 2024

Because the STP-Urban, STP-Rural, STP-Local 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 assistance programs web site:

<https://wisconsinindot.gov/Pages/doing-bus/local-gov/astnce-pgms/highway/default.aspx>

WisDOT Region Contact List

WisDOT Region	Contact	Phone	Email
SE Region	Jacob Varnes	(262) 548-8789	jacob.varnes@dot.wi.gov
SW Region	Rob Winterton	(608) 789-7879	robert.winterton@dot.wi.gov
NW Region	Randy Kirk	(715) 392-7860	randall.kirk@dot.wi.gov
NC Region	Jordan Kelbley	(715) 421-8041	jordan.kelbley@dot.wi.gov
NE Region	Alex Dums	(920) 492-5707	Alex.Dums@dot.wi.gov