

Washington County: Leaders attend WCA Conference 2018, applaud Gov. Walker's county road proposal

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La Crosse – At the 2018 Wisconsin Counties Association Annual Conference, Governor Scott Walker announced his commitment to increase General Transportation Aids (GTAs). The Governor proposed a 30% of-cost funding level, which is the highest match in the program's 25 year history.

The proposal follows Washington County's #JustFixIt plan to maintain the county's roads for the next three decades. Earlier this year, the Washington County Board of Supervisors passed the 2050 Transportation Network Sustainability Plan. The plan provides a strategic roadmap map to ensure sufficient funding for long term maintenance, resurfacing and reconstruction of all County Highways.

In September, the County Board approved \$10 million in bonding for road maintenance. The debt service will be paid without raising property taxes and is expected to be retired early. This cash infusion by the County Board, combined with the proposed increase to GTAs by Governor Walker, will not only ensure adequate maintenance of county roads but will also help achieve strategic improvements to the County's Transportation System for decades to come.

"Washington County is proud to lead local government in the State of Wisconsin by authoring our own reforms to have #JustFixedIt," said County Board Chairman Don Kriefall. "I applaud the Governor's efforts to further invest in county roads in Wisconsin without raising taxes. His approach follows Washington County's record of lowering the property tax rate to World War I levels. I am proud that Washington County is spending our road aids on actually fixing our roads, and look forward to maintaining that commitment with even more resources in the future."

“As one of Washington County’s highest priorities, ‘Effective Mobility and Reliable Infrastructure’ are greatly enhanced by investments such as that announced by the Governor today,” explained County Administrator Josh Schoemann. “It will be through this type of proactive partnership between State and County government that we will be able to better foster our ‘authentic quality of life’ for the citizens and businesses of Washington County.”

The County Highway Department maintains 186 miles of highways. The entire 2050 Transportation Network Sustainability Plan was featured by the MacIver Institute in February.

Items of interest in the plan include the following:

- Road, bridge, and maintenance projects are presented through 2050
- Future road improvement costs adjusted for inflation for the transportation system are estimated at nearly \$144 million through 2050
- County sales tax and federal/state revenues are the primary funding mechanism for County infrastructure maintenance
- Although all options are presented, no new taxes or fees are proposed to offset additional funds needed within the first decade of the plan
- As implemented, the County’s future road system needs will be adequately funded and maintained through 2050

The WCA Conference was attended by County Clerk Ashley Reichert, Chairman Kriefall, 2nd Vice Chairwoman Kris Diess, Supervisors Tim Michalek, Jeff Schleif, Carroll Merry, Bob Hartwig, Roger Kist, Peter Sorce, Dick Bertram, Marilyn Mertan, Administrator Schoemann, and Public Affairs Coordinator Ethan Hollenberger.