

Dept. of Transportation: Local governments now have access to \$75 million in new transportation grants

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Following years of underfunding, Governor Tony Evers recognized the importance of increasing funding for local transportation projects to ensure that local elected officials can address the needs of their communities.

In addition to an historic 10 percent increase (\$66 million over the biennium) in available funding for general transportation aids, paid to counties, towns, villages, and cities, the 2019-21 budget provides \$75 million in one-time funding for transportation projects.

“Law enforcement and firefighters across Wisconsin have called on us to address poor road conditions that are putting Wisconsinites’ safety at risk. By allowing the Department of Transportation to work with local leaders to prioritize the most critical transit and transportation projects, we can ensure that local elected officials are able to respond to the needs of their communities,” Governor Evers said.

“This new program enables local communities to prioritize their most immediate transportation needs,” Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) Secretary-designee Craig Thompson explained. “The grant program is designed to address a range of possible projects, and puts the decision-making in the hands of the locals. We expect that communities will submit the project they believe will have the greatest impact on their economic development and growth.”

Program well-received by local governments

“Throughout the budget process, there was much discussion and debate, but what everyone could agree upon was we needed additional and sustainable funding for transportation,” Wisconsin Counties Association Executive Director Mark D. O’Connell said “The budget passed by the Legislature and approved by the Governor included a 10 percent General Transportation Aids (GTA) increase and this new one-time supplemental funding. These appropriations will devote much needed resources to county infrastructure needs.”

Representatives from county, town, village and city organizations joined Secretary Thompson today at the State Capitol to highlight the features of the new program.

- “Wisconsin’s economy requires strong first and last mile infrastructure connections,” Wisconsin Towns Association Executive Director Mike Koles said. “The 10 percent GTA increase is a solid step toward closing the significant deficiency in town road maintenance efforts, while the one-time injection of almost \$29 million will help fund road and bridge construction that is critical to economic growth and public safety. Together, these strategies approved by the Legislature and Governor will begin to decrease the current 371-year town road replacement cycle.”
- “Cities and villages statewide are grateful that the one budget issue upon which both the Legislature and the Governor agreed was the need to further boost transportation aids for local governments,” League of Wisconsin Municipalities Assistant Director Curt Wityski said. “The budget includes a 10% increase in transportation aides, an increase in transit assistance, and a one-time multi-modal transportation aid supplement. The supplement serves as an important short-term bridge to a long-term sustainable transportation funding solution. Municipalities are particularly pleased that the Governor’s vetoes improved upon the Legislature’s original concept by broadening the uses for which the supplemental aid can be used to include transit capital needs and bike paths.”

Program highlights

The program will pay up to 90% of total eligible costs with local governments providing the balance. Grants will be available for projects statewide related to:

- Roads

- Bridges
- Transit capital and facility grants
- Bicycle and pedestrian accommodations
- Railroads
- Harbors

Local and tribal governments are eligible for the funding. A six-year project completion will be required for approved projects.

Local Government Type	Funding
County	\$26,669,333
City/Village	\$19,039,500
Town	\$29,291,167
Total	\$75,000,000

The program will mirror aspects of the Local Roads Improvement Program (LRIP). The project selection process will include local government committees. The selection will be competitive and involve stakeholder input and review. The emphasis will be on local project delivery with minimal WisDOT oversight.