

ASCE: Civil Engineers give Wisconsin's infrastructure a "C"

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MADISON, WI — The Wisconsin Section of the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) today released the *2020 Report Card for Wisconsin's Infrastructure*. Wisconsin civil engineers gave 13 categories of infrastructure an overall grade of a 'C,' meaning the state's infrastructure is in mediocre condition. Water and energy infrastructure systems have received significant investments and are helping protect the state's natural environment now and in the future, but the transportation network needs support. Civil engineers graded aviation (C+), bridges (C+), dams (C+), drinking water (C+), energy (B), hazardous waste (B-), inland waterways (C-), ports (C+), roads (D+), solid waste (B-), stormwater (C), transit (D+) and wastewater (C-).

Roads and transit received the lowest grades in the report, each earning a 'D+.' Deficient roads cost Wisconsin drivers \$6 billion annually from wear and tear on vehicles, wasted fuel due to congestion and costs of crashes on roadways. Of the state's 115,000 miles of drivable roadways, more than one-third are in fair or poor condition. The Wisconsin Department of Transportation reports that an additional \$180 million is needed per year over the next 10 years just to maintain current pavement conditions. Since gas tax indexing to inflation was abolished by the State legislature in 2006, Wisconsin's gas tax has been set at 30.9 cents per gallon. Wisconsin's transit network is largely dependent on federal grant programs, which have seen reductions since 2012. The state's bridge network faces \$1.4 billion in repairs, but these structures are in better position to cover costs with unique revenue measures, such as electric vehicle registration fees.

"Maintaining a strong infrastructure network is crucial to making Wisconsin more competitive and increasing economic prosperity all across our state," said Kurt Bauer, President and CEO of Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce. "We are

focused on making sure key infrastructure like bridges and ports are at the level Wisconsin needs to thrive, and thorough, fact-based reviews like this one by the American Society of Civil Engineers Wisconsin Section help make that happen.”

There were several notable successes in the report among the categories. The Badger State is one of only a handful of states that has implemented stormwater (C) utilities to fund local stormwater programs. Developers are required to implement stormwater best management practices and perform regular inspections to ensure permittees are meeting a pollutant reduction standard. The state is also one of the first to adopt phosphorous water quality standards to address algae growth; however, municipalities face capital costs of \$1.6 billion to meet those standards. Wisconsin is a national leader in hazardous waste (B-) clean-up, with the state on its way to getting 28 of its 36 Superfund sites on the EPA’s National Priority List delisted. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) also approved cleanups at more than 24,000 hazardous waste sites.

“Wisconsin’s infrastructure systems are interconnected and rely on each other for peak performance,” said Jennifer Schaff, P.E., Co-Chair, 2020 Report Card for Wisconsin’s Infrastructure. “If we are going to promise Wisconsinites an efficient, safe and reliable infrastructure network, we must ensure that no sector is lagging behind.” Ken Mika, P.E., Co-Chair, 2020 Report Card for Wisconsin’s Infrastructure added, “To have a robust local economy, Wisconsinites need to significantly enhance the performance and value of infrastructure projects over their life cycles and foster the optimization of infrastructure investments.”

Energy infrastructure received the highest grade of a ‘B,’ with natural gas, nuclear and coal energy ensuring Wisconsin’s energy needs will be met through 2024. Governor Tony Evers set an ambitious goal of net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 and utilities have so far exceeded targeted greenhouse gas reductions. The state has also collectively worked toward energy conservation. [Wisconsin’s Focus on Energy](#) program, an energy efficiency program financed by utilities, created net economic benefits of \$348 million in 2016. This energy conservation method achieved \$4.32 benefits for every \$1.00 in costs.

Drinking water received a “C+” in the report, above the national average. The state’s 11,000 public drinking water systems could benefit from asset management programs to lower costs and reduce overall water usage, as the sector already needs \$8.6 billion to improve aging pipelines. In 2018, utilities produced 186.7 billion gallons of water but lost over 26 billion gallons (14.2%) to water leakages,

costing the state tens of millions in revenue.

The report also includes recommendations to raise the grades, such as:

- Increase overall investment across all infrastructure sectors to ensure safe, resilient and reliable systems to maintain and improve the quality of life and economic health for the state's residents.
- Continue the success of utilizing effective asset management practices, replicating sectors like major airports and bridges, to better assess condition and future investment needs.
- Create an integrated multi-modal transportation system, especially in urban areas across Wisconsin, to help improve congestion and provide more transportation opportunities.
- Incorporate transit initiatives into land use and transportation planning, including larger service areas, maximized accessibility, and linkages between jobs and supporting workforces.
- Deploy new technologies which can help bridge the gap between smart investment and overall infrastructure needs, encourage new methods of design and construction, and defray costs while providing for a better future for Wisconsin.

The *Report Card* was created as a public service to citizens and policymakers to inform them of the infrastructure needs in their state. Civil engineers used their expertise and school report card letter grades to condense complicated data into an easy-to-understand analysis of Wisconsin's infrastructure network. ASCE State and Regional Infrastructure Report Cards are modeled after the national [Infrastructure Report Card](#), which gave America's infrastructure a grade of 'D+' in 2017.

A full copy of the *Report Card for Wisconsin's Infrastructure* is available at <https://www.infrastructurereportcard.org/state-item/wisconsin/>.