

# Dept. of Transportation: \$6.75 million federal grant will repair Merrimac Bridge

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The Wisconsin Department of Transportation will receive a \$6.75 million federal grant to complete the last phase of the Merrimac Bridge rehabilitation.

The grant was made under the Infrastructure for Rebuilding America (INFRA) program. It will cover about half the cost of the remaining work to upgrade much of the existing rail bridge over the Wisconsin River, which will extend its life and increase its capacity.

“The Merrimac Bridge project had to compete with many others nationwide for this funding. We appreciate the efforts of Senator Tammy Baldwin help secure these federal dollars for our state,” WisDOT Secretary-designee Craig Thompson said. “Along with helping us finish this important project, the INFRA grant will free up about \$5.8 million in state freight rail bridge preservation funds for other bridge repairs.”

The project to rehabilitate the bridge will increase its carload capacity to 286,000 pounds at 25 mph and extend its life by 40 years. Work on the bridge is expected to begin in 2021 and is scheduled for completed in 2022.

“A previous proposal to completely replace the Merrimac Bridge had a much higher cost,” Thompson said. “Our current repair project will strengthen the bridge and extend its life while achieving significant cost savings. This demonstrates WisDOT’s commitment to prudent stewardship of the state’s taxpayer,” he said.

Wisconsin & Southern Railroad carries over 3,600 carloads of freight (about 288,000

net tons) across the bridge to and from Sauk County every year. The bridge is a part of the Madison-Reedsburg line, which was acquired by the state in 2014 from Union Pacific Railroad. The line is Sauk County's only rail connection to the national freight rail system, and thus vital to the businesses in Rock Springs, Baraboo and Reedsburg which rely upon it to economically ship raw materials and finished products.

"More than 170 million tons of freight move by rail in Wisconsin each year. Our rail system is vital to the economic health of our major industries, including manufacturing and agriculture. WisDOT is committed to improving the condition of this vital resource throughout Wisconsin," Thompson said.