

# Sen. Cowles: Plan to improve safety and navigation on and under the HHH bridge approved

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SHAWANO– Senator Robert Cowles (R-Green Bay) released the following statement on the state Department of Transportation’s (DOT) approval of additional funding for a horizontal and vertical increase on the County Road HHH bridge over Shawano Creek:

*“This is a win for residents and visitors to Shawano County. Starting over six months ago, I began hearing from residents in Shawano County about the dangers to both boats and boaters with the low bridge clearance under the HHH bridge. I immediately took these concerns to DOT Secretary Thompson and regional Department staff, and continued these conversations as I witnessed the extent of the support for both raising the bridge clearance and widening the bridge for pedestrian and snowmobile traffic. This proposal wasn’t just an issue of convenience, but it’s an issue of safety and enjoyment for local residents and visitors to the region.*”

*“Too often, in a battle between logic and bureaucracy, the bureaucracy wins. Thanks to advocacy by the County and local residents over the past year, that’s not the case for the HHH bridge. This victory would not have been possible if it weren’t for the tireless work of Shawano County Highway Commissioner Grant Bystol and his team along with the voices of support from hundreds of members of Shawano Area Waterways Management and other local residents. It was my pleasure to have the opportunity to support this local effort and shepherd the message to the DOT Secretary and see a positive result. Working together, we found success.”*

The design elements approved by DOT will increase the vertical clearance from

roughly 5' to 7.1' after numerous residents, including a local Warden from the state Department of Natural Resources, identified the safety and property damage issues with boat navigation under this bridge. The bridge will also be widened to include two 12' lanes plus 10' on each side to allow the safe passage of bicycle and foot traffic in warmer months and snowmobile traffic in winter. Prior to the groundswell of local concern, initial indications from DOT would have led to the approval of a 'replace in-kind' project, meaning additional design elements may not have been approved. However, after successfully convincing DOT, final project designs, including vertical and horizontal enlargement, will now be developed before the construction project begins, which is expected in summer of 2022.

Senator Cowles also continues to advocate for the safety and ease of recreation on Shawano Lake by working with Shawano Area Waterways Management, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, and other stakeholders on both a short-term and long-term solution to low water levels on Shawano Lake.