

Dept. of Transportation: Public invited to comment on WisDOT's cultural resources policy

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The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) invites the public to review and comment on the agency's updates to the cultural resources policy. The programmatic agreement with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) sets the framework for cultural resource management near state transportation project sites.

WisDOT's cultural resources team works with federal, state and local agencies, Tribal governments, the Wisconsin State Historic Preservation Office and other stakeholders to ensure that impacts to Wisconsin's historic and cultural resources are considered early in the transportation project planning process. Cultural resources reviews are conducted on highways, rails, harbors, transit, aeronautics and other federal- and state-assisted programs.

"As we deliver safe and effective transportation options across Wisconsin, we recognize the importance to consult with partnering agencies and core stakeholders to work responsibly near the lands that shape our history," WisDOT Secretary Craig Thompson said. "We are committed to preserving the state's rich historic heritage. We invite Wisconsin residents to learn more about this important part of our work and provide feedback on how we can improve our cultural resources policy."

The Section 106 Delegation Programmatic Agreement comes from the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, which requires federal agencies to consider impacts on historic property. Federal agencies are able to delegate some Section 106 responsibilities to the states. Since 1996, WisDOT has established a programmatic agreement with FHWA. The current update to the Programmatic

Agreement is intended to:

- Codify the WisDOT screening process and initiate collaboration with Tribal governments for ongoing alignment with the agency's Facilities Development Manual Chapter 26.
- Establish emergency procedures and guidance for managing cultural resources discovered within state transportation work sites.
- Enhance the department's longstanding partnerships with Tribal governments, FHWA, Federal Railroad Administration and the Army Corps of Engineers.

Public involvement is a core component of Section 106, and WisDOT is committed to working with local communities to hear comments, questions and concerns regarding cultural resources and factor those conversations into transportation improvement and maintenance projects.

WisDOT encourages anyone interested to participate in the public comment period from March 15, 2023 through April 14, 2023. The draft Programmatic Agreement update is available on WisDOT's website, <https://wisconsindot.gov/-Pages/doing-bus/eng-consultants/cnslt-rsrcs/environment/cultural-resources.aspx>. An electronic comment form is available on the website.