

Gov. Evers: Sends letter to U.S. Department of Transportation Secretary Duffy urging immediate action to prevent uncertainty, delays for critical Blatnik Bridge reconstruction project

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MADISON — Gov. Tony Evers today sent a letter to former Wisconsin Congressman and now U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) Secretary Sean Duffy, urging immediate action to prevent uncertainty and potential delays for the critical restoration of the aging John A. Blatnik Bridge between Superior, Wisconsin, and Duluth, Minnesota, a region that Secretary Duffy himself represented in Congress for nearly a decade. The governor's letter joins [similar outreach](#) sent by U.S. Senators Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), and Tina Smith (D-MN) last week, which stated that delaying the release of this critical funding is a “tool for political retribution” being used against states in the region by the Trump Administration.

Built in 1961, more than 33,000 vehicles cross the John A. Blatnik Bridge each day, and each year, more than 265,000 trucks transporting nearly \$4 billion in goods pass over the bridge. Many businesses across the upper Midwest rely on the bridge to reach the Port of Duluth-Superior, the largest U.S. port on the Great Lakes. The bridge is also one of the largest marine links for U.S. trade with Canada, the top trade partner of Wisconsin, Minnesota, and the United States.

Unfortunately, the Blatnik Bridge has reached the end of its service life, and after

years of advocacy, in January 2024, Gov. Evers and U.S. Sen. Baldwin celebrated the more than \$1 billion federal grant jointly awarded to the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) and Minnesota Department of Transportation to replace the aging bridge. In addition, Wisconsin and Minnesota each committed \$400 million in program funding toward the restoration project.

Last August, Gov. Evers [secured](#) HUBZone designation of Census Tract 310.01 in Douglas County to help provide local businesses with additional resources to remain competitive during the replacement of the bridge and offset anticipated economic losses, as well as assist businesses in the future after the completion of the new bridge and the new opportunities that may come with the upgraded infrastructure. The construction work, scheduled to begin later this year, will also employ 1,100 workers annually.

As detailed in the governor's letter, the timing of this project has been closely developed by all parties, and not moving forward now will delay bridge construction, force a more prolonged bridge closure, and raise costs. Inflation alone on a project of this size has been estimated to cost \$80 million more per year of delay, and this cost does not account for other rework and rescheduling that will be required.

The governor's letter to USDOT Secretary Duffy detailing the steps taken by WisDOT to keep this significant infrastructure project on budget and on schedule is available [here](#). A transcript of the letter is available below.

Dear Secretary Duffy:

I write to ask your immediate action to advance the critically important Blatnik Bridge reconstruction project in Northern Wisconsin, which will be the largest bridge reconstruction project in Wisconsin's history. Without your immediate action, this critically needed project will see harmful delays, not only making the project more expensive but negatively impacting the lives and livelihoods of families, businesses, and industries across Northern Wisconsin.

Built in 1961, more than 33,000 vehicles cross the John A. Blatnik Bridge each day, and each year, more than 265,000 trucks transporting nearly \$4 billion in goods pass over the Blatnik Bridge. Many businesses across the upper Midwest rely on the bridge to reach the Port of Duluth-Superior, which is the largest U.S. port on the Great Lakes and recognized as one of the most efficient, centrally located multimodal hubs in North America. The bridge is also one of the largest marine links

for U.S. trade with Canada, the top trade partner of Wisconsin and the United States.

As you know, Wisconsin was awarded a federal Nationally Significant Multimodal Freight and Highway

Projects program (INFRA) grant in 2024 for the reconstruction of the Blatnik Bridge. With Wisconsin's investment of \$400 million in state funds and the execution of the \$1.0584 billion federal INFRA grant in October 2024, Wisconsin immediately got to work to move forward on this critical project. Per the financial agreement approved for this project, the INFRA grant will be split between the project states, 53-47 percent, with Wisconsin receiving the majority share of federal funds due to the reconstruction of the Wisconsin approach to the bridge being more significant.

The Request for Qualifications was released on July 30, 2025; the shortlisted contractor teams were announced on October 31, 2025; and the Request for Proposals was released on November 10, 2025. The project is scheduled for letting in June 2026. To date, the Wisconsin Department of Transportation has spent millions of dollars to purchase essential real estate, and longtime Wisconsin businesses have relocated or will be shortly to enable the project. Detour routes in Superior are being upgraded this spring to accommodate the amended traffic patterns when the bridge is closed.

The construction work, scheduled to begin later this year, will employ 1,100 workers annually. This is a significant economic investment in Wisconsin, made possible by the assistance offered by this INFRA grant.

This grant was awarded just in time, as the Blatnik Bridge will need to be closed by 2030 due to safety precautions. However, absent your signature on the pending grant amendment to release the federal INFRA grant funds, the project is at risk of not moving forward on schedule, with major consequences. The timing of this project has been closely developed by all parties, and not moving forward immediately will delay bridge construction, force a prolonged bridge closure, and raise costs. Inflation alone on a project of this size has been estimated to cost \$80 million more per year of delay, and this cost does not account for other rework and rescheduling that will be required.

Wisconsin has also applied and continues to apply financial controls to this project and is reporting regularly to Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) partners. An example of these controls is the establishment of a “State to State Financial Agreement” to ensure clear governance and accountability standards for transparent stewardship of these public funds. Wisconsin has a clear track record of abiding by Federal Financial Plan requirements put forth by 23 U.S.C. § 106, Congress, FHWA, and the U.S. Department of Transportation.

I urge you to sign the INFRA grant agreement amendment that was filed with your office in October 2025, so that the project team can confirm with the two shortlisted contractor teams that the project is moving forward on its planned timeline without delay.

Thank you in advance for your action on this project. A newly constructed Blatnik Bridge will stand as a symbol of innovative infrastructure, economic development, collaboration, and all that moves Wisconsin “Forward.”

Respectfully,

*Tony Evers
Governor*

An online version of this release is available [here](#).