



# The WisDOT Connector *Express*

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**Traffic crashes the leading cause of death for teenagers.** Last year in Wisconsin, 96 teens died in motor vehicle crashes and nearly 8,000 were injured. To help focus public attention on this national tragedy, October 19 – 25 has been designated “National Teen Safe Driving Week.” As part of efforts to enhance teen driver safety and help young drivers gain experience behind the wheel, Wisconsin and many other states have implemented Graduated Driver License laws. More info on Wisconsin’s GDL law can be found at: [www.dot.wisconsin.gov/drivers/drivers/gdl/index.htm](http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/drivers/drivers/gdl/index.htm).

**President signs Amtrak bill.** President Bush has signed the Rail Safety Improvement Act that authorizes \$13 billion for Amtrak over the next five years. The measure includes \$3.4 billion in 80/20 federal funding grants that would help states like Wisconsin implement passenger rail improvements. A Congressional appropriation is still necessary to actually fund the legislation. Wisconsin has long sought such a federal/state funding partnership, and has completed preliminary engineering and environmental assessment work to extend passenger rail service between Milwaukee and Madison. About \$80 million in bonding authority has already been approved for the 20% state funding match to implement the Madison/Milwaukee rail corridor. More information can be found at: [www.dot.wisconsin.gov/projects/d1/hsrail/index.htm](http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/projects/d1/hsrail/index.htm).

**Amtrak recording ridership gains.** On a related note, Amtrak’s Hiawatha Service between Milwaukee and Chicago showed the fourth highest ridership increase on the entire Amtrak system according to the nation’s passenger rail carrier. For the federal fiscal year that ended September 30<sup>th</sup>, Hiawatha ridership was up 26% with about 750-thousand riders, the most ever. Amtrak’s cross-country Empire Builder that travels through Wisconsin between Chicago and Seattle showed a ridership gain of nearly 10%. Amtrak officials say highway and air congestion, volatile fuel prices, and increasing environmental awareness are contributing to the ridership increases.

**New license plate supports organ donation.** State residents who want to show their support for organ donation can now obtain a new “Donate Life” license plate for their automobile, motor home or light truck. In addition to the regular vehicle registration fee, a \$25 tax-deductible contribution to Donate Life Wisconsin is required to issue and renew the plate each year – funds that will help save lives and support organ, tissue and eye donation. A \$15-dollar issuance fee is also required for non-personalized plates. More information on how to apply can be found on the WisDOT Web site at: [www.dot.wisconsin.gov/drivers/vehicles/personal/special/donatelife.htm](http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/drivers/vehicles/personal/special/donatelife.htm).

## Upcoming events

November 6 and 7, Second Annual Tribal Transportation Conference, Radisson Hotel and Convention Center, Green Bay. More info: [alyssa.macy@dot.state.wi.us](mailto:alyssa.macy@dot.state.wi.us)

November 12 and 13, TDA of Wisconsin transportation funding symposium, Monona Terrace, Madison. [www.tdawisconsin.org/events/tml](http://www.tdawisconsin.org/events/tml)

November 19, WisDOT Annual Fall Rail Conference, Crowne Plaza Hotel, Madison. More info: [frank.huntington@dot.state.wi.us](mailto:frank.huntington@dot.state.wi.us)

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