

Funding for bicycle and pedestrian facilities in Wisconsin

This document provides a summary of bicycle and pedestrian programs and projects funded in Wisconsin from 1993 to 2007 with additional information on ongoing WisDOT efforts incorporated into state highway projects and programs. The information provided was updated in November of 2007

Bicycle and pedestrian travel is increasingly recognized not only for its recreational and health benefits, but also as a practical transportation alternative. Wisconsin is widely recognized for its quality biking facilities. Residents and visitors alike appreciate the thousands of miles of low volume country roads and the state's excellent trail system. Sparta, WI has tabbed itself as the "Bicycling Capital of America," while a national bicycling publication has often named Madison as one of the top ten bicycling cities in the country for its top-notch biking opportunities. The state's role as an active partner in support of bicycle and pedestrian activities includes: providing technical support and guidance to communities; safety-related educational resources; financial assistance to help local governments invest in bike and pedestrian facilities; and ensuring that the needs of bicyclists and pedestrians are considered in state and federally-funded highway projects.

Since 1993, the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) has committed \$139.7 million in federal funds to 493 bike and pedestrian projects throughout the state. This does not include bike and pedestrian improvements funded as incidental parts of larger projects. Most projects are funded at 80% federal funding with the balance of funding from local and state government partnerships. The primary sources of funding for bicycle and pedestrian projects are from programs started in the early 1990s under the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) that have continued in subsequent federal transportation acts. The programs are described below. A [table listing all of the projects funded since 1993](#) is available to download.

Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) Program

CMAQ was created in 1993 to encourage transportation alternatives that improve air quality. It includes efforts to enhance public transit, construct bicycle and pedestrian facilities, improve traffic flow and promote vehicle and fuel technologies that decrease emissions. Since 1993, \$45.4 million in federal CMAQ awards have been invested in 70 bicycle-pedestrian facilities throughout the southeastern Wisconsin 11 county ozone non-attainment and maintenance area.

Local Transportation Enhancement (TE), Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities Program (BFP) and STP-Discretionary (STP-D) programs

In Wisconsin, these programs have been collectively funded under the Statewide Multimodal Improvement Program (SMIP). The TE program promotes projects that "enhance" the surface transportation system. There are 12 federally eligible categories, with bicycle and pedestrian categories typically making up almost two-thirds of Wisconsin projects awarded. The STP-D program funded projects such as bicycle and pedestrian facilities that foster alternatives to single-occupancy vehicle travel. Up until

1995, there was also a small Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities Program (BFPF) that was primarily used to fund bicycle planning related activities. Funding for the STP-D program was eliminated in the 2003-05 and 2005-07 state biennial budgets. Funding for the STP-D program was revived for the second year of the 2007-09 state biennial budget, then converted to a revived and modified version of BFPF. Since 1993, \$72.3 million in federal funds have been committed to 320 projects through SMIP related programs.

Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Program

The most recent federal transportation act, SAFETEA-LU, added a new bicycle and pedestrian program called Safe Routes to School (SRTS). The program addresses a long-term trend away from children bicycling and walking to school to being transported by car or bus. The trend has not only been part of the increasing levels of traffic congestion and air pollution, but also linked to child health and obesity problems. SRTS is an effort to reverse these trends by funding bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, planning and promotional projects. Projects must be within two miles of a kindergarten to 8th Grade school. Unlike most federal programs above, SRTS are 100% federally funded. The first SRTS funds were used for two projects submitted with the 2006 TE applications. The first competitive statewide cycle began in 2007. The result was 49 projects funded for \$4.9 million.

Other ongoing and previous efforts benefiting bicyclists and pedestrians

State Enhancements - From 1999 to 2002, the state enhancement program was an effort to further utilize federal TE apportionments within state budget spending authority. State highway projects scheduled through 2006 were evaluated for TE eligible elements that could be added to state highway projects and corridors above and beyond what was normally incorporated into the projects. This effort resulted in the approval of \$17.1 million of federal funds for 54 bike and pedestrian related projects. Since then, WisDOT has developed a “Community Sensitive Design” (CSD) policy that promotes many TE type activities as standard practice on state highway projects that are funded as part of the project’s cost. As noted later on, many bicycle and pedestrian related facilities are now a routine part of state highway projects.

Sheboygan Non-motorized Transportation Pilot Program (NTPP) - Sheboygan County was among one of four communities around the country selected for a unique pilot program. The goal of the program is to test whether a major commitment of funds to bicycle and pedestrian facilities could lead to a measurable shift in travel to biking and walking within a community. Like SRTS projects, funding is 100% federal. Sheboygan County is now undertaking a countywide competitive process with several application cycles per year. Over \$20 million in funds will be approved for infrastructure, education and promotional projects by the end of SAFETEA-LU in 2009.

Highway Safety Improvement Program (formerly known as the Hazard Elimination Program) - Bicycle and pedestrian projects are eligible for this program. The program focuses on projects intended for locations that have a documented history of previous

crashes. Contact WisDOT Region coordinators for more details. Chuck Thiede at (608) 266-3341 is the statewide coordinator.

Surface Transportation Program–Urban – Urbanized areas of 50,000 or more population receive an allocation of funds that are distributed every two years. These funds can be used on a variety of improvement projects including bicycle and pedestrian projects. Most of the Metropolitan Planning Organizations that administer this program have been using these funds to integrate bicycle and pedestrian projects as part of larger street reconstruction projects. Contact MPOs for more information.

Incidental Improvements – Bicycle and pedestrian projects are broadly eligible for funding from most of the major federal-aid programs. One of the most cost effective ways of accommodating bicycle and pedestrian accommodations is to incorporate them as part of larger reconstruction, new construction and some repaving projects. Generally, the same source of funding can be used for the bicycle and pedestrian accommodations as is used for the larger highway improvement, if the bike/ped accommodation is “incidental” in scope and costs to the overall project. For example, WisDOT invests millions of dollars annually on bike and pedestrian-related improvements as part of highway and bridge construction projects as noted below.

Paved Shoulders - Approximately 75% of our two-lane state highway system now has three-foot or five-foot paved shoulders to the benefit of bicycles and motorists. Approximately 250 miles of new paved road shoulders are added each year – partially to the benefit of bicyclists.

Bicycle Accommodations on Bridges - Nearly all newly constructed rural bridges have wide paved shoulders and most high cost urban bridges provide bike lanes or a separated path for bicyclists and pedestrians.

Sidewalk Construction - Each year, WisDOT constructs or replaces about 15 miles of sidewalk and another mile of sidewalk as part of bridge projects at an annual investment of about \$1.5 million. Additionally, an undetermined amount of funds are spent on curb ramps, median islands, and pedestrian signals that are often added to projects to help reduce the impact of street projects and are aimed at improving the crossing ease and safety of pedestrians.

Safety, Education and Enforcement - WisDOT invests about \$350,000 of federal and state funds each year on bike and pedestrian education, safety and enforcement.