



## **Transportation Finance Issues**

### **How much is spent on new highway construction vs. fixing existing roads?**

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#### **State's primary responsibility is the state highway system**

- Wisconsin is home to over 114,000 miles of public roads – including federal, state and Interstate highways, local roads and streets. A little more than 10% of these comprise the state highway system.
- While the state highway system accounts for only 10% of all public road mileage in the state, it carries 60% of the traffic load.

#### **Rehabilitating existing highways and bridges the top priority**

- About 50% of the state's 2011-13 highway program budget is dedicated toward rehabilitating statewide highways and bridges.
- Rehabilitation includes resurfacing projects, reconditioning and reconstructing highways to ensure safe driving conditions. Work on bridges along the state highway system generally includes improvements to increase load-carrying capacity and widen deck roadways.
- Input from the general public and elected officials, as well as analysis by state transportation engineers and planners, helps determine which highway rehabilitation projects get constructed.

#### **Major highway projects are a small part of highway spending**

- Major projects account for 11.4% (about \$743 million in 2011-13) of transportation spending.

- Under state law, there are two categories of major highway projects. In the first category, a major project:
  - has a total cost of more than \$30 million
  - constructs a new route of 2.5 or more miles
  - adds capacity to five or more miles of an existing highway
  - or converts an existing multi-lane divided highway of 10 or more miles to freeway standards
  
- A second category of major project is a project with a cost of at least \$75 million.
  
- Typically, major projects do not create new highway corridors, but rather add capacity to existing corridors.
  
- Frequently, major project funds are used to reconstruct existing lanes/bridges – work that would otherwise be paid for with state highway rehabilitation funds.

### **Major project selection process**

- Work on major highway projects is determined through input from the public, elected officials and the Transportation Projects Commission (TPC).
  
- Created in 1983, the 15-member TPC is chaired by the Governor. It includes five state senators, five representatives and three citizen members. The Secretary of the Wisconsin Department of Transportation serves as a non-voting member.
  
- The TPC holds public hearings and makes recommendations on major highway projects. Ultimately, the Governor and the Legislature determine which projects are enumerated and funded through the state budget.