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# HOWARD MARKLEIN

STATE SENATOR • 17<sup>TH</sup> SENATE DISTRICT

## Capitol Update

by Senator Howard Marklein

July 16, 2021

### Keeping My Eyes on the Roads

Now that State Budget deliberations are completed, the COVID-19 pandemic is ebbing and life is getting back to normal, I am traveling all over the 17<sup>th</sup> Senate District to participate in parades, community festivals, meetings and other events. The number one issue I continue to hear most is the need to improve our local, rural roads.

As you may remember, I led a second effort this year to include \$100 million for local roads in the State Budget. Thankfully, this appropriation survived the veto pen. My plan included \$100 million to the Local Roads Improvement Program (LRIP). It will be allocated across county, municipal and town governments; \$35,559,100 for county projects, \$25,386,000 for municipal projects, and \$39,054,900 for town projects.

I am grateful that this funding survived the veto pen. I tried to take similar action last budget and it was vetoed by Governor Tony Evers. As you may recall last budget, we started with \$133 million for local roads, which was then compromised to \$90 million to be divided among the towns, counties, cities and villages for local road maintenance and repair. This is what the legislature passed in the 2019-20 state budget.

Unfortunately, Governor Tony Evers shaved \$15 million off of these dollars and further vetoed all of the language to direct the funding to local roads. The Wisconsin Supreme Court ruled this veto unconstitutional. The DOT ended up creating the Multi-modal Local Supplement (MLS) program and funded bicycle paths, transit and other projects in addition to roads. It was also competitive, so many of our most needy municipalities were left behind.

I am optimistic that sending the new funding through the existing LRIP criteria will make distribution more equitable and effective. I am hopeful that directing these funds this way will go to repair and maintain local roads.

I was also proud to support 2% increases in each year of the State Budget for General Transportation Aid (GTA) to counties, municipalities and towns. This equates to \$2,681 per mile in 2021-22 and \$2,734 per mile in 2022-23. These funds are used by local governments to improve, maintain and construct roads.

It is important to note that all Department of Transportation (DOT) projects will remain on schedule with no tax or fee increases, as well as the lowest level of DOT bonding in decades. This is all great news for drivers, local governments and taxpayers.

We are already seeing a lot of road construction throughout the 17<sup>th</sup> Senate District this summer. According to my contacts at each of our counties, we have at least 51 road projects investing at least \$35

million in our communities this summer. There are 19 state projects worth \$23 million and 32 county and local projects worth \$12 million. Crews are working hard to take advantage of the short road construction season to improve our roads.

I will continue to keep my eyes on the roads in Wisconsin. As I drive through the 17<sup>th</sup> Senate District to take advantage of all of the community events that have been scheduled this summer, I hope to see a lot of orange cones and earth moving. If you see road construction crews during your travels, please slow down and move over to keep them safe.

As always, please do not hesitate to contact me if I can provide information or assistance on any state related matter. Please call 608-266-0703, email [Sen.Marklein@legis.wisconsin.gov](mailto:Sen.Marklein@legis.wisconsin.gov) or write to me at PO Box 7882, Madison, WI 53707.

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