

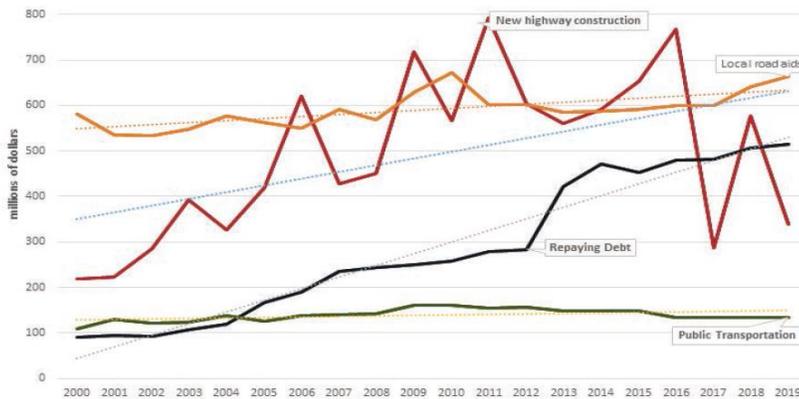


## Clean, Effective Transportation for Wisconsin: 2019-21 Budget Priorities

### Background: Decades of Misplaced Priorities Have Hurt Wisconsin’s Transportation System

Decades of misplaced spending priorities have left Wisconsin’s transportation infrastructure in rough shape. For the past twenty years, **state leaders have spent heavily on expanding Wisconsin’s major highways**, often based on questionable justifications and without a clear understanding of the long-term costs and benefits of these big-ticket projects. With revenue stagnant, we have been left with fewer resources to meet urgent needs.

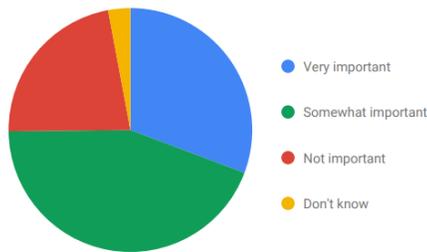
WisDOT Modal Funding Trends 2000-2019



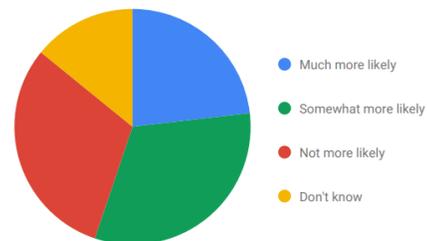
Now, **roads across the state are deteriorating** – particularly at the local level – and our **public transportation systems are struggling** to get people to the places that matter – work, school, the doctor’s office. Our focus on expanding roadway capacity has also encouraged more people to drive, worsening congestion and generating **emissions harmful to public health and the environment**.

Demographic trends in Wisconsin add to the urgency of shifting the focus of our transportation priorities: We know that **young people** want to live and work in the kinds of places where they can get around without a car.<sup>i</sup> At the other end of the age spectrum, Wisconsin’s population of seniors is rapidly growing; as Wisconsinites live longer lives and increasingly outlive their ability to drive, **providing non-driving options to get around will be critical to preserving our elders’ independence** and quality of life.<sup>ii</sup>

After graduation, is it important to you to live in a place where there are other options for getting around besides driving?



How much more likely would you be to stay in Wisconsin after graduation if you could live in a place where trips for work, recreation, and errands didn't require a car?



**WISPIRG Foundation survey results of over 600 young Wisconsinites show that Millennials would be more likely to stay in Wisconsin after graduating college if communities offered more multimodal transportation options.**

(Source: WISPIRG Foundation, *Millennials on the Move*, 2019)

Additionally, an inadequate transportation system severely limits opportunities for Wisconsinites with disabilities to participate in community life and the workforce: A Survival Coalition survey found that **72 percent of respondents with disabilities had trouble finding transportation** at least a third of the time, while 59 percent said that inadequate transportation options restricted their ability to find and keep a job.<sup>iii</sup>

## **Solution: Invest in 21st Century Transportation Infrastructure**

Wisconsin deserves a transportation system that meets 21st century needs, and that uses taxpayer dollars responsibly. **Effective transportation policy creates attractive communities with high quality** of life for all, not only for those who are able to, can afford to, or who choose to drive. By maximizing the benefits of new technologies, doubling down on proven strategies like **public transit, walking and biking infrastructure**, encouraging smarter design of our cities and towns, and transitioning to electric vehicles, we can ensure that the transportation system we pass on to our children is clean, efficient, and accessible to all and makes the best use of our resources.

## **Budget Priorities: No New Highway Expansions; Forward-Thinking Investments to Meet Local Needs**

To put Wisconsin on track towards a 21st century transportation system that addresses current and future needs, state leaders should:

- 1. Allow no new highway expansion enumerations:** Highway capacity expansions – whether adding lanes to existing highways or building new highways, including when lane additions are part of larger road rehabilitation projects – fail to address congestion, saddle taxpayers with long-term debt, and absorb money that can be used for more pressing needs, from maintaining existing infrastructure to fixing potholes on local roads to providing effective public transportation service.<sup>iv</sup> Adding highway capacity also encourages more driving, which in turn leads to greater emissions that threaten public health and the climate. We recommend investing in transportation solutions that reduce the need for costly and disruptive highway expansion projects.
- 2. Increase public transit funding by at least \$36 million per year** to help meet current and future needs. Expanding multimodal transportation options can reduce congestion, cut harmful emissions, increase mobility opportunities for people underserved by a car-centered transportation system, and make Wisconsin more attractive to young people who gravitate towards living and working in multimodal communities.
- 3. Increase local road funding by \$40 million per year**, as recommended by Gov. Walker’s Transportation Finance and Policy Commission’s 2013 report *Keep Wisconsin Moving*.<sup>v</sup> Local roads are not adequately maintained throughout the state, with one in three local roads in poor or worse condition - increasing costs for motorists.<sup>vi</sup> Meanwhile, 98 percent of Wisconsin’s major state highways are in good or better condition.<sup>vii</sup>
- 4. Increase specialized transportation funding by 10 percent in 2019, and by 3.5 percent yearly after that.** Specialized transportation services, like shared-ride taxis, are critical a critical way of providing mobility to many seniors and Wisconsinites with disabilities, particularly in suburban and rural parts of the state.
- 5. Oppose any efforts to remove public transit from the Segregated Transportation Fund.** Public transit is a vital component of Wisconsin’s transportation system, and it should be treated (and funded) as such.

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### **References**

<sup>i</sup> See, for example, WISPIRG Foundation, *Driving Wisconsin’s “Brain Drain?” How Outdated Transportation Policies Undermine Wisconsin’s Ability to Attract and Retain Young Talent for Tomorrow’s Economic Prosperity*, 2014. And WISPIRG Foundation and Frontier Group, *Millennials in Motion: Changing Travel Habits of Young Americans and the Implications for Public Policy*, 2014.

<sup>ii</sup> See, for example, Wisconsin Aging Advocacy Network, 2018 Transportation Issue Paper, “Reliable, Accessible, and Affordable Transportation: The key to remaining independent, engaged and connected,” 2018.

<sup>iii</sup> Survival Coalition of Wisconsin Disability Organizations, *Wisconsin Transportation Survey Results*, September 2018, accessed at <http://www.survivalcoalitionwi.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/wi-transportation-survey-infographic.pdf>.

<sup>iv</sup> WISPIRG Foundation and Frontier Group, *Highway Boondoggles 4: Big Projects. Bigger Price Tags. Limited Benefits*, 2018.

<sup>v</sup> Wisconsin Transportation Finance and Policy Commission, *Keep Wisconsin Moving: Smart Investments, Measurable Results*, 2013.

<sup>vi</sup> 1000 Friends of Wisconsin, *Wisconsin’s Local Roads Crisis*, 2015.

<sup>vii</sup> Wisconsin Department of Transportation MAPSS Performance Scorecard, “State Highway Pavement Condition (backbone),” July 2018. Accessed at <https://wisconsin.gov/Pages/about-wisdot/performance/mapss/goalpreservation.aspx>.