

October 1, 2020

Craig Thompson, Secretary-designee  
Wisconsin Department of Transportation  
Hill Farms State Office Building  
4822 Madison Yards Way  
Madison, WI 53705

Dear Secretary Thompson,

On behalf of the Governor's Bicycle Coordinating Council, I am writing you to request that the Department of Transportation include additional funding for the Transportation Alternatives Program in its 2021-23 biennial budget request. Specifically, the council requests that the department allocate the entire Transportation Alternatives set-aside for bicycle and pedestrian projects.

The Federal Highway Administration provides funds for non-motorized transportation through the Transportation Alternatives set-aside of Surface Transportation Block Grant. The state of Wisconsin utilizes these federal funds via the Transportation Alternatives Program. The funds are used, in part, to provide financial support for bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure.

States have a great deal of latitude in allocating the set-aside funds and up to 50 percent of Transportation Alternatives funding may be utilized for other Surface Transportation Block Grant eligible projects. To that end, Wisconsin's Transportation Alternatives Program has only been funded at \$7,049,300 SEG-F annually since fiscal year 2014-15, despite the state's ability to provide additional federal dollars to the program. Further, the allocation of \$1,000,000 SEG annually in state funding for the Transportation Alternatives Program was eliminated in the 2015-17 biennial budget.

The Transportation Alternatives Program received 68 applications to the statewide pool in this program cycle, for a total of approximately \$48 million in requested funds. Of those applicants, 28 were selected by the committee and forwarded to the Secretary of Transportation for approval. These projects total \$14.15 million, which dedicates more than 99 percent of the available funds in this program cycle.

As recently as 2014, Wisconsin was ranked the third most bike-friendly state in the nation by the American League of Bicyclists. Currently, Wisconsin is ranked #29. The state has also seen an increase in serious injuries and fatalities among non-motorists. Based on the most recently available data, the five-year average for serious injuries and fatalities by non-motorized individuals increased from 361.4 in 2016 to 362.8 in 2018. This is above the state's target of 343.3.

The COVID-19 pandemic has increased bike ridership and pedestrian activity. For example, year-to-date totals from trail counters in the city of Milwaukee have recorded an increase of riders from 433,570 in 2019 to 510,094 in 2020. In order to help maintain these ridership levels once the pandemic recedes, additional bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure will be needed. Recently, the council commissioned the *2019 Economic Impact of Bicycling in Wisconsin* which found that \$1.42 billion was spent by consumers on bicycle-related expenses in Wisconsin in 2017. Bicycling is an important part of Wisconsin's economy and our heritage. Additional Transportation Alternative Program funds would improve bicycle infrastructure in Wisconsin and help the state regain its standing as a leader in cycling.

This request was approved by the council at its September 15, 2020 meeting. Please note that the vote was among the public members of the council, as the departmental representatives from the various agencies on the council recused themselves from the discussion and abstained from the vote.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Cordially,

Andrew R. Potts, Chair  
Governor's Bicycle Coordinating Council

cc: Barb Worcester, Deputy Chief of Staff, Office of the Governor  
Jenni Dye, Policy Director, Office of the Governor  
Derek Campbell, Policy Advisor, Office of the Governor