



To: Governor Tony Evers
From: Kirsten Finn, Executive Director, Wisconsin Bike Fed
Willie Karidis, Route of the Badger Project Manager, Rails to Trails Conservancy
Bob Burns, Vice President & Senior Legal Officer, Trek Bicycle Corporation
Noel Kegel, President, Wheel & Sprocket
Date: December 23, 2020
RE: **Request for Increased TAP Funding**

Our organizations represent biking and trail advocates from across the state. We understand that you may be in the final weeks of developing your 2021-23 state budget, but we wanted to follow-up regarding a recommendation from the Governor's Bicycle Coordinating Council and included in the report from the Governor's Task Force on Climate Change regarding the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP). **Specifically, we request the TAP program be funded at \$11.3 million annually in the 2021-23 state budget.**

Once the second most bicycle-friendly state in the country, according to the League of American Bicyclists, Wisconsin has dropped to 29 in recent years. One reason for this is our relatively low investment in non-motorized transportation. The Wisconsin TAP provides much-needed resources to communities for bicycle and pedestrian projects that strengthen the intermodal transportation system. Awarded projects expand travel choice, strengthen the local economy, improve the quality of life, and protect the environment by supporting non-traditional projects linked to the transportation system.

During the past year we have seen explosive growth in biking and walking. In the early days of the pandemic, trail use soared, spiking more than 200% nationwide on average compared to last year. Since then, increased trail use has sustained at around 37% higher than in previous years. We believe additional investment in the TAP will further ensure safer, more accessible routes for Wisconsin residents and returning tourists.

The federal government provides flexibility for the state to determine the amount available to TAP from the federal Transportation Alternatives set-aside in the state budget process. Wisconsin has opted since 2014 to allocate only \$7 million annually for TAP. Additionally, in 2019 \$4.3 million in TAP funding was instead allocated to the surface transportation block grant program.

In their 2021-23 budget request, Wisconsin Department of Transportation proposed keeping TAP funding flat at \$7 million annually. However, the need for additional TAP dollars continues to grow. In the most recent award cycle, the Wisconsin Department of Transportation received 68 applications, for a total of approximately \$48 million in requested funds. Allocating an additional

\$4.3 million annually (for a total of \$11.3 million annually) to TAP will make a sizable impact on the number of projects that can be funded. Meanwhile, the corresponding reduction to the surface transportation block grant is less than 2 percent of the total funds.

Finally, as mentioned earlier, increased funding for TAP is one of the recommendations in the Governor's Task Force on Climate Change report. The Task Force's report recognizes the importance of investments in pedestrian and biking infrastructure in low-income and underserved communities. We recommend you specifically allocate the additional requested TAP funds for projects in low-income and underserved communities.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

CC:

Department of Transportation Secretary Craig Thompson
Jenni Dye, Policy Director, Office of the Governor
Lieutenant Governor Mandela Barnes, Chair of the Governor's Task Force on Climate Change