



Sara Rodriguez

Responses to the Wisconsin Bike Fed Governor Candidate Questionnaire - Spring 2026

Do you support proposed legislation like AB694/SB690 (restoring eminent domain)? Please share a brief rationale for your position.

The 2017 budget provision stripping local governments of condemnation authority for trails, bike lanes, and pedestrian ways was slipped into the budget without debate, and communities across Wisconsin have paid the price ever since — stalled road projects, sidewalks that end abruptly, and trail connections left unfinished even when federal dollars are on the table. This is fundamentally about local control. Mayors, village boards, and county supervisors know their communities' transportation needs better than Madison does, and they shouldn't have one tool in the toolbox arbitrarily taken away for one category of infrastructure. Eminent domain always requires just compensation and should always be a last resort — but restoring it for bicycle and pedestrian facilities simply puts these projects back on equal footing with every other public use.

Do you support proposed legislation like AB334/SB343 (complete streets)? Please share a brief rationale for your position.

When we rebuild a road with state or federal dollars, we should build it once and build it right — for everyone who uses it, whether they're driving, walking, biking, or rolling. Moving WisDOT's obligation from "due consideration" to a requirement, with clearly defined exceptions, is common sense. But I'd go further: Wisconsin needs a comprehensive, long-term infrastructure plan — one that looks decades ahead, not budget to budget, and that defines infrastructure as more than roads and bridges. Wisconsin was once a national leader on this; we're the only state to have repealed its Complete Streets policy, and we've paid for it in safety and in our national standing ever since. In a Rodriguez administration, WisDOT will restore a Complete Streets policy administratively, so that streets designed for all users are the standard, not the exception. As a nurse, I see this as public health: complete streets mean fewer crashes and fewer preventable deaths.

Do you support proposed legislation like AB 371/SB375 (Milwaukee traffic safety camera)? Please share a brief rationale for your position.

I support giving Milwaukee this tool and I'd note this bill has authors from both parties and strong support from Milwaukee's own elected leaders, who have been asking for it for years. Reckless driving in Milwaukee is a crisis measured in lives, and speed safety cameras are a proven, evidence-based intervention. I also appreciate that this legislation includes real guardrails: warning periods before citations begin, public notice of camera locations, no points or license suspensions, and required assessments of civil rights and privacy impacts. It's important to note these safety cameras are not the same as Flock license plate readers, which

photograph every passing vehicle and store drivers' movements in databases shared across agencies. The cameras in this bill work the opposite way: they activate only when a driver runs a red light or speeds dangerously, and the law itself prohibits the data from being shared, repurposed, or monetized. Local communities asked for help; the data supports it; and the safeguards are written in. That's how good policy should work.

Emotos (and other OCEVs) are an increasing concern in communities, and many are adapting local ordinances that create a patchwork of varying laws. Should Wisconsin define e-motos in legislation, should there be regulations on the sale and use of these vehicles?

Wisconsin needs a clear statewide definition. Right now, e-motos occupy a legal gray area: they look like e-bikes but exceed the power and speed limits of the three-class e-bike system, and they're being sold to families with no clarity about where they can legally and safely be ridden. The result is exactly what the Bike Fed has documented: a confusing patchwork of local ordinances that's unfair to riders, unworkable for law enforcement, and risky for everyone sharing trails and paths. The state should define e-motos in statute, keep that definition distinct from legitimate Class 1–3 e-bikes so we don't undermine e-bike access, and establish sensible point-of-sale labeling and use regulations. I'd want the Bike Fed, local governments, retailers, and law enforcement at the table to get the details right.

What is your position on the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Fund?

I strongly support Knowles-Nelson, and I'm angry about where we are. This program has protected land, built trails, and expanded outdoor recreation in all 72 counties for more than 35 years with bipartisan support, and it is now set to expire on June 30 because Republican leadership pulled the reauthorization bills off the Senate calendar at the last minute when their own caucus couldn't agree. Letting one of Wisconsin's proudest conservation legacies die through dysfunction is inexcusable. As governor, I will fight for a long-term reauthorization with robust funding for land acquisition, local assistance, and trail development, not a hollowed-out version that exists in name only. Wisconsin's outdoor heritage shouldn't be a casualty of caucus infighting.

In recent years, visits to our State Parks and Trails have increased while funding for the DNR has decreased. This has resulted in the inability to maintain facilities, and in some cases lead to closures. What do you think is an appropriate funding mechanism for Wisconsin's State Parks and Trails?

Wisconsin asks more of its state parks every year and gives them less. Since the Legislature eliminated all general purpose revenue for parks operations in the 2015–17 budget, our system has been forced to survive on user fees alone — and the result is a maintenance backlog of roughly \$1 billion, reduced staffing, and facilities closing even as visits climb. I've proposed Wisconsin look hard at Michigan's Recreation Passport model: a small, optional fee at vehicle registration that gets you into every state park and trailhead all year, with the revenue dedicated by law to park and trail maintenance and protected from diversion. Michigan generates over \$40 million a year this way — far more than per-visit fees ever did — by making access cheaper for each family while broadening who contributes. But a passport is a complement to state investment, not a substitute for it. I'd restore a meaningful general fund commitment to our

parks, stop diverting federal Transportation Alternatives dollars, and pair all of it with a fully reauthorized Knowles-Nelson program. Our parks are economic engines for rural Wisconsin and a birthright for our kids. We should fund them like it.

Are you familiar with Minnesota's Legacy and Trust Funds, and would you support legislation of that nature for Wisconsin?

A dedicated passport fee is the near-term fix; Minnesota shows what generational ambition looks like. I think Wisconsin should take a serious look at that model. In 2008, Minnesota voters constitutionally dedicated a small fraction of the sales tax to outdoor heritage, clean water, parks and trails, and cultural programs — creating stable, voter-protected funding that doesn't disappear every time a legislature deadlocks. Given what's happening to Knowles-Nelson right now, the value of funding that can't be held hostage to legislative dysfunction should be obvious. As governor, I'll champion the effort to design a dedicated conservation and recreation funding mechanism for Wisconsin built with sportsmen and women, land trusts, local governments, and groups like the Bike Fed at the table, and put to Wisconsinites to decide. Minnesota proved voters will say yes to protecting the outdoors. I believe Wisconsinites would too.

The Governor's Bicycle Coordinating Council was established in 1977 by then Governor Patrick Lucey. What do you see as the mission and purpose of the council?

The Council exists to make sure bicycling has a seat at the table in state government — coordinating across WisDOT, the DNR, Tourism, and Health Services so that bike policy isn't an afterthought scattered across agencies. Nearly fifty years after Governor Lucey created it, I see its mission as three things: advising the governor and agencies on policies that make biking safer and more accessible; connecting state decisions to the local advocates and officials doing the work on the ground; and championing bicycling as what it truly is for Wisconsin — transportation, public health, tourism, and economic development all at once. But a council only works if it's whole and if it's heard. As governor, I'll work to see every seat filled, including pressing legislative leaders to appoint their members, appoint people who ride, who advocate, and who represent every corner of the state, and treat the Council's recommendations as input to real decisions.