

STATE SUMMARY OF COUNTY TRANSPORTATION FUNDING AND FINANCE

WISCONSIN COUNTIES

FUNDING SOURCES FOR COUNTY TRANSPORTATION PROJECTS

From State Funds:

- General Transportation Aids (GTA) is the largest funding source paid to local governments. In CY 2012, counties received \$94.6 million, which is about 23% of total funds. GTA helps offset the cost of county and municipal road construction, maintenance, traffic and other transportation-related costs. These funds are distributed based on a six-year spending average of a statutorily set rate-per-mile.
- Local Transportation Facility Improvement Assistance program includes the Surface Transportation Rural Program (STP-Rural), the Surface Transportation Urban Program (STP-Urban) and the Local Roads Improvement Program (LRIP). LRIP funding for 2011-2013 was \$56,066,000 from state segregated funds, with a minimum of \$56,066,000 in local matching dollars.
- Local governments receive \$30,159,377 in annual funds under the Local Bridge Improvement Assistance program for the 2013-2018 program cycle. This program helps rehabilitate and replace the most seriously deficient existing local bridges on Wisconsin's local highway system.

From Federal Funds:

- Local governments receive annual federal funds totaling \$64,861,425 in the STP-Urban and \$22,698,554 in the STP-Rural program for 2013-2018.

From County Funds:

- One county imposes a wheel tax.
- Sixty-two (62) counties have adopted the 0.5 percent local option sales tax, which can be allocated to transportation projects as part of an annual appropriation process, but not earmarked on an ongoing basis.

COUNTIES FACE THE FOLLOWING CHALLENGES IN FUNDING AND FINANCING TRANSPORTATION PROJECTS

- The state restricts the amount of property taxes counties can raise to pay for these services.
 - Counties now operate under permanent levy limits, and have also been subject to tax rate limits barring them from exceeding their December 1992 property tax (mill) rate.
 - Due to declining property values, some counties have had to cut their budgets beyond what is required by the levy limits to comply with the tax rate limit.

Share of County Owned Road Miles Out of Public Roads Statewide	18%
Share of County Owned Bridges Out of Public Bridges Statewide	22%
Share of Structurally Deficient Bridges Out of County Owned Bridges	7%

COUNTY FINANCIAL AUTHORITY		
	County Authority	Limitations
Levy Property Taxes	X	Counties may adopt property taxes up to 2 mills to fund improvements to their own network of roads
Levy Personal Property Taxes		
Levy Local Option Sales Taxes	X	Counties can levy local option sales taxes of up to .5% approved by the county legislative body, only to be used to reduce property taxes
Levy a Local Gas Tax		
Charge a Motor Vehicle License or Registration Fee	X	Fees such as a wheel tax must be passed by a county board resolution
Form Special Districts for Transportation		

- The partnership between counties and the state is being challenged by funding shortfalls, as well as increasing amounts of lane miles and vehicle miles in the state each year and increasing demands on infrastructure.
- A large portion of county highway budgets are devoted to winter road maintenance. Winter weather in Wisconsin degrades roadways and roads must be built to a different standard to withstand the severe weather conditions.

NEW FUNDING AND FINANCING SOLUTIONS FOR COUNTIES

- Wisconsin County Highway Association (WCHA) is working with a coalition of transportation stakeholders to identify a number of alternative funding sources for transportation and also determine the relative impact of the alternative sources recommended in the recent 2012 Wisconsin Transportation Finance and Policy study report to state legislature.
- Many of Wisconsin counties have now turned to bonding or short term borrowing as methods of funding transportation projects. Monies used for these improvements are exempt from the state imposed local levy limits and may be included in the annual mill rate calculations.

BREAKDOWN OF COUNTY TRANSPORTATION FUNDING¹

County Share	40%
State Share	40%
Federal Share	20%

¹ This is an estimate based on information from the Wisconsin Counties Association. The estimates are variable on a year to year basis depending on local budgets and State Legislature.