



Wisconsin Department of Transportation/Wisconsin County Highway Association

Executive Committee Meeting

Monday, October 9, 2023

Time: 9:00 am

Location: Lismore Hotel

333 Gibson St

Eau Claire, WI 54701

[Virtual Meeting Link:](#)

[Join meeting](#)

Attendees:

Agenda:

1. Approve meeting minutes from 9.11.23 Executive Committee meetings
2. WisDOT – HMM Policies status/update (general update)
 - a. 2024 RMA Budget Levels
 - b. Salt Shed Design Policy
3. WCHA Website Update
4. IRS Designation – update
5. Update on centralized bidding platform
6. Efforts by Cong. Van Orden on Rural Roads
7. Training and Events Update
 - a. Fall Commissioner Training - October 9-10, 2023, Lismore Hotel, Eau Claire
 - b. Winter Tech Talk – Winter Maintenance Training Experts
 - c. Winter Road School
8. Executive Director report
 - a. Deputy Director – Recruitment Update
 - b. Policy Items: LRIP Program, green lights for utility vehicles, weight limit exception bill for certain milk products, other
9. Legislative Update
10. NACE Conference 2024
11. Further agenda items
12. Next Meeting Date – November 13, 2023 at 10 am



Wisconsin Department of Transportation/Wisconsin County Highway Association

Executive Committee Meeting

Monday, September 11, 2023

Time: 10am

Location: Eau Claire County Highway
5061 US Hwy 53, Eau Claire

Attendees:

Patrick Vander Sanden, Roland Hawk, Jon Johnson, Matthew Budde, Robbie Krejci, Gary Kennedy, Jim Griesbach, Rebecca Szymkowski, John Marchewka, Marv Thompson, Whitney Wilgus, David Stertz

The meeting was called to order at 10:01 am CT.

Agenda:

1. Approve meeting minutes from 7.10.23 and 8.14.23 Executive Committee meetings
A motion was made by Budde and seconded by Johnson to approve both sets of meeting minutes.
2. WisDOT – HMM Policies status/update (general update)
 - a. Szymkowski provided an update on HMM policies. Four policies were brought forward to WCHA for feedback. Policy 02-25-35 has been published. Policy 02-30-60, which deals with cost provisions, is in WisDOT's court to update accordingly and publish. Policies 02-20-96 and 02-20-86 both deal with salt sheds and lean-to buildings, and it is recommended to set up a meeting with DSTS and invite WisDOT to propose changes.
 - b. Stertz noted that the solar salt pilot is discontinued, but he noted that some counties are having trouble with salt cleanliness. WisDOT will commit to paying for trucking cleaner salt to a county that claims it is having issues. WisDOT has never had a testing policy or protocol regarding salt; this year, DOT will ask for a poll of all counties to see how their salt looks coming in observationally. If it is reported that the salt is dirty, DOT will come and take samples. The goal is to figure out where the issue lies, whether it is the salt or the brine maker. WisDOT will try to provide a list of counties with clean salt.
 - c. WisDOT is working through issues on non-connecting highways and sidewalks. If a municipality does not sign a state municipal maintenance agreement, WisDOT would transfer real estate back to the municipality.
 - d. WisDOT is working on addressing connecting highway treatments. In Policy 02-10-15 there is an excerpt from the WTVA MOU where they will eliminate a section under corrective maintenance by municipalities regarding connecting highways.
3. WCHA Website Update
 - a. Progress review meeting
 - i. Wilgus has scheduled a meeting with Schmidt, Hawk, and Vander Sanden to review the website updates made thus far.
4. Associate Member Recruitment Ideas (Impact)

- a. Wilgus with Impact suggested drafting flyers to advertise associate membership, and Kennedy and Wilgus touched on some of the data issues that WCHA has. Vander Sanden will pull together a group to review the data
5. Discuss/Consider Forming Employee Review Committee
 - a. Krejci and Vander Sanden will work on drafting language to form an employee review committee.
6. IRS Designation – update
 - a. A mission statement must be drafted. Griesbach reviewed a list of questions for the Executive Committee to consider.
 - b. Wilgus will provide examples of Conflict of Interest policies to Vander Sanden.
7. Update on centralized bidding platform
 - a. Vander Sanden provided an updated; they suggested scheduling a call with InfoTech. This could potentially impact public bid law.
8. Training and Events Update
 - a. LDG Road School
 - i. LDG Road School is just over a week away. All vendor booths sold; 300 people are scheduled to attend. The banquet is scheduled on Tuesday night where awards will be given.
 - b. Fall Commissioner Training - October 9-10, 2023, Lismore Hotel, Eau Claire
 - i. Vander Sanden and Kennedy are finalizing the agenda for the Fall Commissioner’s training. Marchewka will be a speaker during the event.
 - c. Winter Tech Talk – Winter Maintenance Training Experts
 - i. Winter Tech Talk was set up by WCA, and WisDOT supported it. Szymkowski will have contact reach out to Vander Sanden after Thursday to begin planning. Location may be the biggest challenge; the Northeast district was suggested as a location.
 - d. Snowfighter training
 - i. Vander Sanden has emailed counties regarding the training.
9. Executive Director report
 - a. Deputy Director – Recruitment Update
 - i. Forty-three applications have been received. Vander Sanden still needs district reps to help review applications and interview candidates; he will pre-screen applications before sending to the district reps.
 - b. WCA Conference
 - i. Vander Sanden will be representing WCHA at the conference on Sunday.
 - c. Policy Items: LRIP Program, green lights for utility vehicles, weight limit exception bill for certain milk products, other
 - i. The LRIP program webinar was held. Vander Sanden noted that all parties are willing to sit down and discuss the green lights issue; however, there is little urgency on their side. The committee discussed the strategy for weight limit exception bill for certain milk products and suggested writing a letter to other committees.
10. Legislative Update
 - a. Krejci provided a legislative update.
11. WCHA actions on condolences/memorials for employees in county highway departments
 - a. The Executive Committee is in agreement that what was provided for the family in Winnebago was appropriate.
12. Further agenda items
 - a. Apparel for WCHA
13. Next Meeting Date – October 9, 2023 at 10 am

The meeting was adjourned at 12:37 pm CT.



TO: WCHA Executive Committee
FR: Patrick Vander Sanden
DATE: October 9, 2023
RE: Committee Meeting Notes – October Meeting

WCHA Executive Committee,

Here are some notes/summaries of issues on the October Executive Committee agenda:

- WisDOT HMM Policies: Dave, Rebecca and John from the Bureau of Highway Maintenance will be in attendance for any review/discussion of HMM policy updates. Specifically, we hope to discuss the RMA budget levels for 2024, and updates on the salt shed construction policies under consideration (06-20-86 – Salt Shed Designs)
- WCHA Website: IMPACT has completed updates to the WCHA website following review and conversation with Roland and Scott Schmidt, Tech Advisory Committee Chair. There will be time set aside at the Fall Commissioner Training on Monday to give a quick reveal of the changes for the members.
- IRS Designation Update: Our partners at WIPFLI have been reaching out to WCHA for materials needed to complete the filing with the IRS for our non-profit designation. The last pieces requested were an approved Conflict of Interest Policy and a Mission Statement. Solid, yet “makeshift” drafts of each item were presented to the Board of Directors at their September meeting for approval with the understanding that we’d revisit both at a later date to refine them. The bottom line is that both the Conflict-of-Interest Policy and Mission Statements were approved by the Board and provided to WIPFLI for their continued work on this project.
- Centralized Bidding Platform: A meeting has been set up with WTBA to further discuss how such an arrangement could be set up.
- Congressman Van Orden: Rural Roads efforts. Max Seltzer, Aide to Congressman Derrick Van Orden, had reached out to myself and Jon Johnson with concepts for a federal program to address rural road repair. The information provided by Max is attached for our review and discussion.
- Training and Events Update/Executive Director Report: Gary Kennedy will provide his report on WCHA training and events and I will provide information on the items listed below on the agenda.
- WCHA Organization, Deputy Director position: 4 individuals have been confirmed for interviews with the review panel this Wednesday. Among a long list of applicants, there were 10 stronger candidates that the panel reviewed to pare down to this 4. Hopefully, one of these individuals will emerge and we can move forward.
- Policy/Legislative Items: General update on Legislative and Policy items been developed, supported and monitored.
- NACE Conference 2024: I add this to the agenda having a ‘feeling’ we need to discuss and determine funding/budget for members who wish to attend the 2024 NACE Conference.

Derrick Van Orden Joins Bipartisan Bill to Improve Rural Roads

Image

September 13, 2023

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[Press Release](#)

WASHINGTON, DC – Today, Rep. Derrick Van Orden (WI-3) joined Reps. Brad Finstad (MN-1), Pete Stauber (MN-7), and Jared Golden (ME-2) in introducing the Protecting Infrastructure Investments for Rural America Act. This bill would remove barriers for rural communities to apply for and receive funding under the Rural Surface Transportation Grant Program, also known as the Rural Grant Program.

“Wisconsin farmers, workers, and families deserve to get from Point A to Point B safely,” said Van Orden. **“Strong rural infrastructure is essential to strong communities in the Third District, and I am proud to join Reps. Finstad, Stauber, and Golden in this bipartisan effort to deliver results for America’s Heartland.”**

Specifically, the Protecting Infrastructure Investments for Rural America Act would lower the definition of “rural area” from 200,000 in population to 20,000 to be in line with definitions used by the Small Business Administration and the USDA Office of Rural Development. This ensures rural communities are not forced to compete with big cities for infrastructure funding.

“America’s counties own and operate more roads and bridges than any other level of government, and the vast majority of our nation’s public road miles are located in rural counties,” said National Association of Counties Executive Director Matthew Chase. **“The Protecting Infrastructure Investments for Rural America Act will build on the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law by expanding access for counties to the Rural Surface Transportation Block Grant Program. We thank Representatives Finstad and Van Orden for their leadership and look forward to working with our bipartisan congressional partners to ensure passage of this important legislation.”**

Find the bill text [here](#).

H.R. ____ : Protecting Infrastructure Investments for Rural America Act

Background: The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (Public Law: 117-58) authorized funding for various infrastructure related initiatives. Part of the package was the creation of the Rural Surface Transportation Grant Program (Rural Grant) to ensure infrastructure investments authorized through the bill reached our small and rural communities, who are at a severe disadvantage when it comes to receiving federal funding and applying for federal grants.

Issue: Unfortunately, the program as currently written has significant barriers for infrastructure projects in rural communities to be eligible for funding under the Rural Grant program, as well as barriers for rural communities to apply and receive funding under the program. These barriers leave it nearly impossible to accomplish the statutory goals of the program as set out by Congress.

Solution: Remove barriers for rural communities to apply and receive funding under the Rural Grant program and clarify goals so further implantation of the grant fit original Congressional intent.

The *Protecting Infrastructure Investments for Rural America Act* would:

1. Lower the definition of “rural area” from “200,000” to “20,000” to be in line with the definition of “rural area” used by the Small Business Administration and USDA Rural Developments Community Facilities program;
2. Clarify that one of the goals of the program is to promote economic development in rural areas and improve the quality of life for citizens who reside in rural areas;
3. Allow the grant to be used for common road, bridge, highway, or tunnel projects, which will make more projects in rural areas eligible for funding under the program;
4. Strike the minimum project amount of \$25M as the vast majority of projects in rural communities are under this amount and this is a significant barrier for these communities to access funding under the program;
5. Lower the cost-share burden for communities with less than 5,000 in population (90% federal share), making it easier for projects in these communities to be completed; and
6. Establish a set-aside of at least 5% of funding under the program to go to communities with a population of less than 5,000.

Cosponsors: Reps. Pete Stauber (colead), Jared Golden (colead)

Outside Support: National Association of Towns and Townships, National Association of Counties, Minnesota Association of Townships

**For any questions, or to cosponsor, please contact Dylan Rosnick
202-225-2472 or dylan.rosnick@mail.house.gov**

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(Original Signature of Member)

118TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. _____

To ensure the rural surface transportation grant program is accessible to rural areas, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. FINSTAD introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on _____

A BILL

To ensure the rural surface transportation grant program is accessible to rural areas, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Protecting Infrastruc-
5 ture Investments for Rural America Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. RURAL SURFACE TRANSPORTATION GRANT PRO-**
7 **GRAM.**

8 Section 173 of title 23, United States Code, is
9 amended—

1 (1) in subsection (a)—

2 (A) in paragraph (2) by striking
3 “200,000” and inserting “20,000”; and

4 (B) by adding at the end the following:

5 “(3) SMALL COMMUNITY.—The term ‘small
6 community’ means an area that is outside an urban-
7 ized area and that has a population of 5,000 or
8 less.”;

9 (2) in subsection (b)(2)—

10 (A) in subparagraph (B) by striking “and”
11 at the end;

12 (B) in subparagraph (C) by striking the
13 period at the end and inserting “; and”; and

14 (C) by adding at the end the following:

15 “(D) to generate economic growth and de-
16 velopment in rural areas to improve the quality
17 of life for citizens in rural areas and small com-
18 munities.”;

19 (3) in subsection (e)(1)—

20 (A) in subparagraph (F) by striking “or”
21 at the end;

22 (B) in subparagraph (G) by striking the
23 period at the end and inserting “; or”; and

24 (C) by adding at the end the following:

1 “(H) a highway, road, bridge, or tunnel
2 project that would benefit the economic develop-
3 ment or quality of life for citizens of the com-
4 munity in which the project takes place.”;

5 (4) by striking subsection (i);

6 (5) by redesignating subsections (j), (k), (l),
7 (m), (n), and (o) as subsections (i), (j), (k), (l), (m),
8 and (n), respectively;

9 (6) in subsection (i) (as so redesignated)—

10 (A) in paragraph (1) by striking “para-
11 graph (2)” and inserting “paragraphs (2) or
12 (3)”;

13 (B) by redesignating paragraph (3) as
14 paragraph (4); and

15 (C) by inserting after paragraph (2) the
16 following:

17 “(3) FEDERAL SHARE FOR PROJECTS IN SMALL
18 COMMUNITIES.—The Federal share of the cost of a
19 project carried out in a small community with a
20 grant under the program may not exceed 90 per-
21 cent.”;

22 (7) in subsection (j) (as so redesignated) by
23 striking paragraph (1) and inserting the following:

24 “(1) PROJECTS IN SMALL COMMUNITIES.—The
25 Secretary shall use not less than 5 percent of the

1 amounts made available for the program for each
2 fiscal year to provide grants for eligible projects in
3 a small community.”; and

4 (8) in subsection (l) (as so redesignated) by
5 striking “subsection (l)(1)” and inserting “sub-
6 section (k)(1)”.