



WISCONSIN TOWNS ASSOCIATION

Empowering Town Officials

W7686 County Road MMM
Shawano, WI 54166
715-526-3157
wtowns@wisctowns.com
www.wisctowns.com

WTA Summary of 2023-25 Executive Budget Proposal

Governor Evers delivered his budget address and released his proposed 2023-25 Executive Budget on February 15, 2023. Proposals impacting town government are highlighted below. WTA will work with the administration, Joint Committee on Finance, and legislature to ensure that the budget enhances the ability of town governments to provide quality foundational services that support citizens and businesses throughout the 95% of Wisconsin in which town officials provide leadership.

Broadband

- Invest \$750 million GPR for the Broadband Expansion Grant program with a requirement that the Public Service Commission spend at least \$75 million annually on grants.
- Redefine “unserved” to include areas with service speeds less than 100 megabits per second (mbps) download and 20 mbps upload. Allow PSC to reevaluate this standard every two years. Additionally include areas without “available, reliable, and affordable” service as “unserved.”
- Require PSC to prioritize broadband grant applications contributing matching funds of at least 40 percent of the total requested funding amount, as well as applications for service speeds of 100 mbps download and 100 mbps upload.
- Require PSC to consider the affordability of service and all federal funding for broadband in the proposed project area when evaluating grant applications.
- Establish a procedure for Internet service providers (ISP) to challenge a grant award.
- Provide 2.0 FTE positions and associated expenditure authority to the State Broadband Office to assist with the expanded Broadband Expansion Grant program and the challenge process.
- Eliminate several statutory restrictions for certain municipalities defined as broadband “unserved” to enable them to directly invest in broadband infrastructure and provide service to residents. Allow these communities to apply directly for broadband expansion grant funding from the Public Service Commission.
- Create a Broadband Line Extension Grant Program, funded at \$1.75 million GPR in fiscal year 2023-24 and \$3.5 million GPR in fiscal year 2024-25, to provide grants and financial assistance to eligible

households to subsidize the cost of a line extension from existing broadband infrastructure to a residence that is not served by a broadband provider.

- Modify current law to require broadband service providers to meet certain service requirements, including prohibiting a broadband service provider from denying service to residential customers based on race or income and requiring providers to award credits to customer's internet bills based on service outages.

General Government

- Require employers conducting projects of public works, both state and local, to pay workers the hourly wage and benefits paid to most workers in the project's area, commonly known as prevailing wage.
- Establish collective bargaining rights for state and local government frontline workers and their bargaining units. Frontline workers are defined as employees with a substantial portion of job duties interacting with members of the public or large populations. The Wisconsin Employment Relations Commission would settle definitional disputes.
- Require local government employers to include a just cause standard of review of termination in their grievance procedures. Additionally, require local government grievance procedures to address employee discipline and workplace safety issues, and include an impartial hearing from the Employment Relations Commission during which the employee would be entitled to legal representation.
- Bolster local communities with \$25 million GPR annually beginning in fiscal year 2023-24 to continue state support of the Main Street Bounceback Grant program, aimed at restoring business occupancy in vacant commercial spaces.
- Close the dark store loophole for commercial property assessments.
- Create a Local Government Grant Resource Team at DOA and provide \$411,300 GPR in fiscal year 2023-24, \$548,400 GPR in fiscal year 2024-25 and 5.0 FTE GPR positions, to assist local governments in navigating state and federal grant application processes.
- Raise the threshold at which an authority may charge an open records location fee from \$50 to \$100.
- Provide 1 FTE position to DOR's Statewide Debt Collection program to increase efforts to collect debts owed to state agencies and local governments. Additionally provide \$446,000 in each year of the biennium for the supplies and services costs of the program.
- Allow for the collection of the existing manufacturing assessment fee from municipalities by directly reducing shared revenue payments.

- Repeals the prohibitions on local governments enacting ordinances regarding minimum family and medical leave requirements, wage claims and collections, employee hours and overtime (including scheduling of work hours or shifts), required employment benefits, and solicitation of a prospective employee's salary history.
- Allow municipalities and counties to sell wine in public parks.
- Provide \$2.1 million GPR over the biennium to provide state matching funds for a cybersecurity grant program.

Elections

- Allow a county or municipal clerk to canvass absentee ballots on the day before an election after working with the Wisconsin Elections Commission to ensure it will be conducted fairly and effectively.
- Eliminate the restriction on how soon a person may complete an absentee ballot in person.
- Create a sum sufficient appropriation to reimburse counties and municipalities for certain costs incurred in the administration of special primaries and special elections.
- Provide \$400,000 in fiscal year 2024 for grants to municipalities interested in obtaining “Badger Book” electronic poll books.
- Require polling places to post a voter bill of rights that informs voters of voting rights guaranteed under current law.
- Reducing the voter residency requirement from 28 days to 10 days before an election.
- Modify the Wisconsin Elections Commission’s training appropriation to explicitly allow funds to be used to train municipal and county clerks on all aspects of election administration, in addition to voter ID requirements.
- Modify the Wisconsin Elections Commission’s recount appropriation to allow local units of government and petitioners to be reimbursed in a timely manner.

Emergency Services

- Broaden the types of service sharing arrangements that qualify for the joint fire and joint EMS levy limit adjustments.
- Fund the youth firefighter training grant program at \$100,000 in each year of the biennium.

- Provide \$150 million for flexible grants to public and private emergency medical services providers.
- Allow the certification of emergency medical responders if they complete a certified training program or pass the National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians examination.
- Provide \$1,265,600 over the biennium to implement the public ambulance provider certified public expenditure provisions of 2021 Wisconsin Act 228. Additionally create statutory language to implement the private ambulance provider assessment provisions of Act 228.
- Require worker's compensation coverage for first responders who experience post-traumatic stress disorder.
- Provide \$1,440,000 GPR to purchase epinephrine for public ambulance providers.
- Provide \$45 million GPR for the design and implementation of a new statewide interoperable communications system.
- Provide \$506,400 GPR annually for training and equipment for an urban search and rescue task force.
- Provide \$6 million GPR annually for grants to help in the transition to Next Generation 911 by training staff, purchasing equipment, and upgrading software.
- Provide \$2,500,000 in fiscal year 2024 to support the creation of a regional emergency medical services training facility in partnership with the city of Baraboo.
- Provide \$1,000,000 to fund the rebuilding of the public safety building in the town of Silver Cliff.

Housing

- Establish an Affordable Workforce Housing Grant program and provide \$150 million GPR in fiscal year 2023-24 to provide funding to local municipalities to encourage the development and maintenance of additional affordable workforce housing in the state. Municipalities that change zoning criteria to support additional affordable housing development would qualify for a bonus.
- Provide \$100 million GPR in fiscal year 2023-24 to create a Municipal Home Rehabilitation Program to award grants to municipalities to renovate and restore blighted residential properties.
- Increase the amount of a tax incremental finance district's area that can be comprised of newly platted residential developments to 60 percent instead of the current law 35 percent, if that additional amount is used solely for workforce housing.

- Allow municipalities to extend the life of a tax incremental finance district by up to three years, rather than the current one year, if the municipality adopts a resolution specifying how it will increase the number of affordable or workforce housing units.
- Prioritize housing grant applications to municipalities that implement policies aimed at improving the availability of workforce housing.

Local Government Funding

- Allocate 20% of the state's sales tax collections to local governments aids, ensuring that future local government aids will grow with state sales tax collections.
 - Existing shared revenue will continue at current amounts.
 - 43.4% of new funding will support public safety (law enforcement, fire, EMS, courts, and district attorneys). No local government will receive less than \$10,000 under the public safety aid distribution.
 - 56.6% of new funding will be distributed as general aid with 70% allocated to municipalities and 30% to counties. General aid will be distributed based on population and equalized value.
 - Going forward, no local government may receive less than 95% of the prior year's distribution.
- Repeal the personal property tax and provide \$202.4 million in fiscal year 2024-25 to compensate all local taxing jurisdictions for the reduction in their property tax base. The payments to local governments would increase in future years with inflation.
- Allow Milwaukee County to impose an additional 1 percent sales tax, with 50 percent of the resulting new revenue distributed to the city of Milwaukee, to diversify local revenue sources and improve the ability of both Milwaukee County and the city of Milwaukee, if approved by local referendum.
- Allow counties, other than Milwaukee County, to impose an additional 0.5 percent sales tax and allow municipalities with populations over 30,000, other than the city of Milwaukee, to impose a 0.5 percent sales tax, if approved by local referendum.
- Revise the expenditure restraint program to allow for increases in spending due to accepting federal dollars or increased levies approved by voters via referendum.
- Provide \$578,000 GPR in fiscal year 2023-24 and \$520,200 GPR in fiscal year 2024-25 to the towns and counties that experienced a reduction in their property tax base due to a recent federal court decision that exempted from property taxation of certain tribal lands, with this funding phasing out over 10 years.
- Increase the payments for municipal services appropriation by 5 percent, providing a \$929,200 annual increase to local governments serving tax-exempt state property.

- Provide \$300 million GPR in one-time funding over the biennium to the Department of Administration to support the continuation of three community investment programs that were funded with funds from the American Rescue Plan Act:
 - Neighborhood Capital Investment Fund Grant Program (\$150 million), which provides grants to local and Tribal governments to invest in community and regionally-based solutions to bolster Wisconsin’s workforce for the future, such as projects to build affordable housing, increase transit and transportation access, and expand child care, or other areas based on unique local workforce needs.
 - Healthcare Infrastructure Capital Grant Program (\$100 million), which provides grants for investments in healthcare infrastructure necessary to expand access to affordable healthcare, build facilities in areas of high-need, and reduce disparities in healthcare outcomes and services statewide, among other key priorities.
 - Tourism Capital Investment Grant Program (\$50 million), which provides funding to assist local and Tribal governments and nonprofit organizations to bolster Wisconsin’s tourism, travel, and lodging economies.
- Include utility-owned battery storage facilities in the calculation of shared revenue utility aid payments to counties and municipalities.
- Include utility-owned electric vehicle charging infrastructure in the calculation of shared revenue utility aid payments to counties and municipalities.
- Provide 1 FTE position to DOR’s Local Government Services Bureau to improve customer service to local governments and assist with the distribution of shared revenue and property tax credits.
- Reduce funding from the police and fire protection fund by \$300,100 over the biennium for county and municipal aid to provide funding for the Department of Military Affairs’ Next Generation 9-1-1 initiative.

Levy Limits

- Allow a minimum growth factor of 2 percent for county and municipal levy limits.
- Remove the required negative levy limit adjustment that the transferring government must take when transferring the provision of a service to another government.
- Create an exclusion to county and municipal levy limits for certain cross-municipality transit routes.
- Remove the current law negative county and municipal levy limit adjustment for fees for “covered services.”
- Remove the current law supermajority requirement for the utilization of carryover county and municipal levy limit capacity.

- Allow municipalities to exceed the 12 percent of equalized value limitation on tax increment district financing if those municipalities have a district expiring in the following year that would bring them below that limitation.

Transportation

- Increase general transportation aids for both counties and municipalities by 4 percent in calendar year 2024 and another 4 percent in calendar year 2025.
- Provide an increase of 4 percent in each year of the biennium for the local road improvement program (LRIP).
- Provide an ongoing \$50 million SEG supplement to the local road improvement program (LRIP-S) each year beginning in fiscal year 2023-24.
- Increase mass transit aids by 4 percent in calendar years 2024 and another 4 percent in calendar year 2025. Additionally, provide an increase of \$3,386,200 over the biennium for paratransit aids, elderly and disabled aids, and support for employee sponsored commuting options.
- Provide \$10 million in each year of the biennium for a transit capital assistance grants.
- Pay down nearly \$380 million of debt in the transportation revenue bond program.
- Transfer nearly \$190 million from the general fund to the transportation fund over the biennium.
 - Transfer the state sales tax generated by the sale of electric vehicles into the state transportation fund.
 - Transfer a portion state sales tax on the sale of auto parts, tires, and repair services into the state transportation fund.
- Provide \$16,000 SEG to develop and implement electric vehicle identifier plate stickers to assist first responders in emergency response.
- Establish a new program with \$60 million GPR in funding for traffic calming grants to make biking, running and walking safer.
- Restore the ability of cities, villages, and towns to use eminent domain to build pedestrian and bike paths.
- Provide \$1.2 million annually to provide matching funds for Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) projects for small communities.
- Allow local governments to establish Regional Transit Authorities.

- Allocate \$8 million SEG to support local government administration of federal local road program funding opportunities.
 - \$3 million to help local governments perform the administrative steps that must occur before a local road project becomes eligible for federal funds.
 - \$5 million for technical assistance so that local governments can meet federal reporting requirements throughout the duration of local road projects.
- Allow quarries to operate as needed when providing materials for public works projects that require nighttime work.

Natural Resources

- Provide \$100 million over the biennium for a municipal grant program for the testing and remediation of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) by local units of government.
- Provide \$729,400 SEG in fiscal year 2023-24, \$934,200 SEG in fiscal year 2024-25, 10.0 FTE SEG permanent positions, and 1.0 FTE SEG four-year project position in the Department of Natural Resources for the implementation of the PFAS action plan.
- Provide \$1,480,000 SEG in fiscal year 2023-24 and \$730,000 SEG in fiscal year 2024-25 for statewide monitoring and testing for PFAS.
 - \$600,000 annually for testing at state-led sites.
 - \$55,000 annually for waterway monitoring.
 - \$50,000 for testing fish and wildlife
 - \$25,000 annually for testing wastewater treatment plants.
 - \$750,000 one-time in fiscal year 2023-24 for sampling municipal water supplies
- Provide \$1 million SEG in fiscal year 2023-24 for the collection, disposal, and replacement of firefighting foam that contains PFAS.
- Require municipal comprehensive plans to address climate change, require that local hazard mitigation plans include consideration of climate change, and require communities throughout the state to include climate change impacts in their community health improvement assessment and plans.
- Establish a technical assistance grant program to assist municipalities and Tribal Nations in developing plans to be carbon-free by 2050. Provide \$125,000 GPR per year at the Office of Environmental Justice for this purpose.
- Continue the Private On-Site Wastewater Treatment System Replacement and Rehabilitation Program at a funding level of \$840,000 in both years of the biennium.
- Provide \$1,000,000 in fiscal year 2025 for financial assistance under the well compensation grant program.

- Provide \$200,000 in fiscal year 2024 under the Safe Drinking Water Loan Program for the replacement of lead service lines.
- Provide \$250,000 in fiscal year 2023-24 and 1.0 FTE position to develop a stretch energy code for Wisconsin. A stretch energy code permits local governments to voluntarily enact regulations that improve energy efficiency relative to the base energy code.
- Prohibit the sale and use of sealants that contain coal tar, coal tar pitch, coal tar volatiles, or high concentrations of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, which are considered cancer causing substances.
- Authorize \$11 million in environmental fund-supported general obligation bonding authority for the Department of Natural Resources for urban nonpoint source cost-sharing and the municipal flood control program.
- Provide \$250,000 SEG in each year for the Wisconsin Clean Sweep Program, which provides reimbursement to communities that collect and dispose of household hazardous wastes, agricultural pesticides, and prescription drugs.
- Expand the Farmland Preservation Planning Grant Program to allow for activities that implement certified farmland preservation plans.