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Wisconsin Towns Association

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Town Road Investment

My name is Michael Stern and I live on a 163-acre farm on a rural town road in the Town of River Falls. Many of the roads around my house are town funded roads. On these same town roads, I see the impact they have both locally and across the State of Wisconsin.

Agriculture is an important part of Wisconsin's economy. Town roads directly impact the agriculture of Wisconsin, and more specifically the success of my family's farm. During the course of the spring and summer, our town road is used by agricultural equipment. Every spring, we use the road to transport tractors, tillage equipment, and planters from field to field. After planting, our local cooperative brings fertilizer to spread on the field. A town road is essential for a successful spring planting. In the summer, the town road is essential for cash crops. Many hay customers use the road to purchase hay from us. Farm labor also utilizes the town roads to get to our farm. The broader Wisconsin agriculture is using town roads too. In Wisconsin today, there are more than 68,500 farms (Gaille). Twelve percent of jobs in Wisconsin are agriculturally based, and the dairy industry itself generates 43 billion dollars into the economy (Gaille). There is no doubt that the agriculture economy is strong in Wisconsin, but there is one thing that each industry needs to be successful: roads. Roads are vital for the transportation of products, freight, and especially milk. Town roads play an important role of milk transportation because most dairy farms are out in rural areas. Therefore, the agriculture economy and my farm are dependent on town roads.

Town roads also affect housing. In the past five years there have been three homes built on our town road. For months straight, there were concrete, dump trucks, and contracting trucks driving on our road to build these homes. Once the homes were built, I also saw the local garbage and recycling trucks using our road for their weekly pick-ups. Many of our neighbors also use the local town recycling center and use town roads to get there. That is an example of another type of business that we do not often think of, but it provides jobs in the local community.

As far as local businesses, they need roads to stay in operation. My mom is the town clerk for the Town of River Falls. She depends on the mail and local delivery services as part of her job. The town road workers keep the roads in good condition so that the U.S Postal Service can deliver mail to all of the people that live in the town. This includes all of the people that are working from home or that have home-based occupations. They also rely on the town roads to be accessible for delivering mail and other deliveries for their businesses.

River Falls has numerous education facilities that require transportation. In River Falls alone, there are two colleges, a high school, a middle school, and four public elementary schools. There are also numerous private schools around too. In Wisconsin, towns maintain 61,996 miles of road (Towns Association). A good amount of this road is used by school transportation. Many children and citizens depend on town roads to be in good condition in all seasons so that they can pursue their education. As far as my local town goes, the school bus uses our town road twice every day. Personally, I use the town road to travel to my school. Education is dependent on the use of town roads across the State of Wisconsin.

When people think of what town roads are used for, most do not think of the forestry industry. When I was younger, I remember a tree planting service coming to our farm and planting 10,000 trees on a Conservation Reserve Program field. This was just one area of forested land. Currently in Wisconsin, there are 16 million acres that are forested (Natural Resources). Of those 16 million acres, many of them are logged or planted every year. Town roads provide transportation to the plots of forested land, and are a big part of a successful forestry economy.

Many of our most beautiful areas in Wisconsin depend on town roads to access them. In our town, we have seven parks. One of them is located just a few miles from my house. In 2017, 20.6 billion was generated into the Wisconsin economy by tourism (Tourism). Tourism and recreation are a big part of my life too. I love to snowmobile and four-wheel. Many of the recreational trails utilize town roads as sections of trails. If town roads were not available for recreational use, the tourism economy would suffer. Others love to hunt and fish, which require roads also. Many of these recreational opportunities are only available in areas that are accessible by local town roads.

Mining related, the Peterson Sand Pit in our town was approved in 2017. The sand pit will utilize both state and town roads as means of transporting the sand. Mining is an important part for town roads because it actually provides the gravel and sand for building the roads. Mining provides other materials that benefit the Wisconsin economy, and roads are used to transport these materials to sell and use.

The Wisconsin economy is dependent on many vital sectors to generate income, and many of these sectors are dependent on town roads. Roads are the foundation of the Wisconsin

economy, and more specifically, town roads are the base for local government. Without town roads, state and local government economies would suffer. Town roads are essential for agriculture, housing, local businesses, education, forestry, tourism and recreation, and mining.

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