



SENATOR

# Robert Wirch

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## WISCONSIN ROAD DETERIORATION

### Dear Friend,

The funding of state transportation projects in Wisconsin is fairly complicated, with a mix of state and federal funds, as well as bonding (or borrowing) used to foot the bill. What is simple and undeniable is the fact that our state faces a transportation funding crisis that's been brewing for several years and continues to get worse.

The largest source of funding for our transportation programs is our segregated Transportation Fund, which has an annual revenue of over \$1.9 billion. That's problematic because, according to the nonpartisan

Legislative Fiscal Bureau (LFB), the Transportation Fund is facing a \$1 billion deficit. Compounding the problems, increased borrowing in recent years has led to record levels of transportation debt. LFB says that by the end of the 2019 fiscal year, debt payments will have virtually doubled since 2010. In 2010, Wisconsin spent 11.5% of our transportation funding revenue on debt payments; by the end of FY2019, it is expected that almost 22% will be spent paying off debt. This means less money for road projects, higher cost to taxpayers, and of course roads still badly in need of repair

and causing damage to cars statewide.

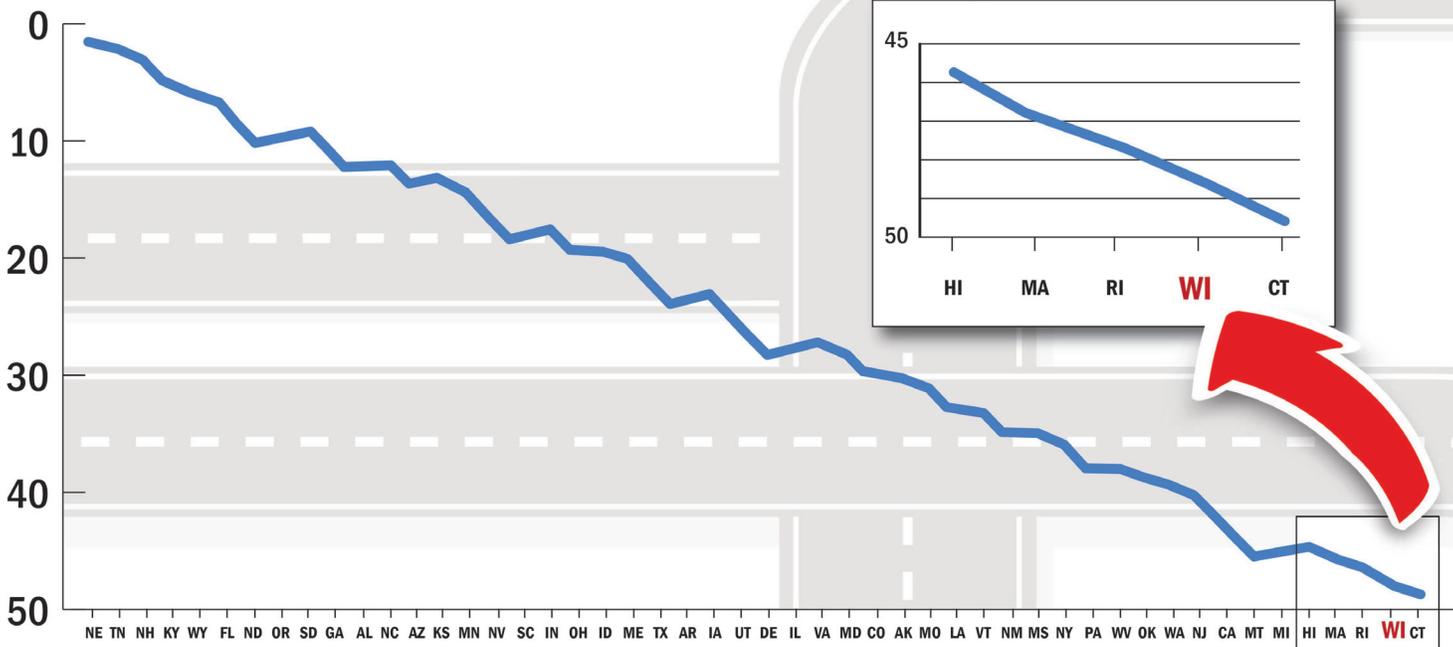
Years of bad decisions and mismanagement have led us here. A report by the Legislative Audit Bureau in 2017 found huge cost overruns on projects at the Department of Transportation. The audit looked at nineteen completed projects and sixteen ongoing projects; costs for the completed projects came in \$1.5 billion over estimate, and the sixteen ongoing projects were already \$3.1 billion over budget. Shortly after release of the audit, the press uncovered an internal DOT memo that warned about a "tidal wave" of critical road work

that "can't be delayed forever"; the memo warned that Walker and Republican budgeting would lead to more congestion, worse road conditions and decades of delayed projects.

This is a crisis made by bad budgeting and poor policy. At this point, there are no easy answers. However, it's long past time for real leadership on this issue before our roads get worse and taxpayers are forced to open their wallets once again.

Sincerely,

## 2017 State Road Quality Ranking



Source: U.S. News and World Report

# State Roads Deteriorate Thanks to Recent Policy Decisions

During these deeply divided times, one thing Wisconsinites of all political persuasions can agree on is that our roads are a mess and only getting worse.

Wisconsin's roads, once ranked among the best in the country, have greatly deteriorated under the watch of Governor Walker and legislative Republicans. In 2017, two highly respected surveys rated Wisconsin's roads 2nd and 3rd worst nationally; in 2016, the U.S. Department of Transportation ranked Wisconsin roads 4th worst and found that 71% were in mediocre or poor condition. Major, necessary projects are being pushed back, while the average Wisconsin driver spends \$637 per year on repairs to their car due to driving on damaged roads. The transportation fund is facing a \$1 billion shortfall, and borrowing for transportation projects is almost double what it was when Walker took office, resulting in untold millions in additional cost to taxpayers.

Recently, Mark Gottlieb, former Walker-appointed Department of Transportation Secretary and once a Republican member of the Assembly, issued a scathing rebuke of Walker and GOP transportation funding policy, calling recent transportation budgeting a failure and saying, "We got to a place where the facts were being ignored in favor of political spin." This is shocking but not surprising, given Walker's history of putting short-sighted decisions for political gain ahead of the long-term needs of our state. We need to have a real discussion about the issue. Difficult choices will need to be made, and clearly Governor Walker and legislative Republicans would rather kick the can down the road than do the hard work that the people of Wisconsin need and deserve.

**Contact Governor Walker and ask him about the road conditions in your area.**

**Office of the Governor:** P.O. Box 7863 • Madison, WI 53707 • (608) 266-1212 • <https://walker.wi.gov/contact/contact-form>



## Attend One of My Listening Sessions to Share Your Thoughts

I hold frequent office hours, or what I call "listening sessions", which provide me with an opportunity to speak with and hear from community members in a comfortable, relaxed setting, often at one of our local libraries. It helps me better do my job as a legislator to know what is on the minds of the people in my community, and it gives people an opportunity to seek assistance with state agencies or programs.

I held dozens of listening sessions during the 2017-2018 legislative session, and I will continue to do so because, as an elected official, it's very important for me to stay connected to the people that put me in office. Keep an eye on the local news or call my office for details about my listening sessions in the future.



## Contact State Senator Robert Wirch

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