



STATE OF WISCONSIN

Legislative Audit Bureau

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Joe Chrisman  
State Auditor

DATE: October 12, 2015

TO: Senator Robert Cowles and  
Representative Samantha Kerkman, Co-chairpersons  
Joint Legislative Audit Committee

FROM: Joe Chrisman   
State Auditor

SUBJECT: Proposed Audit of the State Highway Program—Background Information

At your request, we have gathered some background information that the Joint Legislative Audit Committee may find useful in considering an audit of the State Highway Program, which is administered by the Department of Transportation (DOT).

DOT is responsible for planning, designing, constructing, and maintaining the approximately 12,000 miles of Wisconsin's state highways, including interstate highways. During the 2013-15 biennium, revenue that supported the State Highway Program totaled approximately \$3.6 billion.

The State Highway Program includes five main components: 1) the state highway rehabilitation program for rehabilitation and reconstruction of existing state highways and bridges; 2) the major highways program for development and construction of new or significantly improved state highways; 3) the Southeast Wisconsin freeway megaprojects program, which includes the reconstruction of the Interstate 94 North-South freeway and the Zoo Interchange projects; 4) the major interstate bridge construction and the high-cost bridge construction programs; and 5) the state highway maintenance, management, and operations program for maintenance and repair of existing state highways.

We have previously conducted audits that analyzed various aspects of the State Highway Program. In addition to the annual State of Wisconsin Single Audit, these audits include: Construction and Inspection of Asphalt State Highways (March 2011), Construction Engineering in State Highway Projects (May 2009), and Major Highway Program (report 03-13). In these reports, and in others issued since 1996, we made recommendations for improving management of the State Highway Program.

Recently, legislators and others have raised a number of questions about Wisconsin's state highways, including whether DOT is appropriately managing the planning, design, construction, and maintenance of state highways.

An audit of the State Highway Program could:

- examine changes and trends in revenue, expenditures, staffing, and state highway conditions over time;
- analyze and consider potential improvements to DOT's planning, design, construction, and maintenance processes for the State Highway Program, including the traffic forecasting, construction bidding, and engineering selection processes;
- compare the estimated cost of state highway projects, as determined by DOT before project work began, with the actual cost of completed projects;
- assess DOT's performance measures, including those related to highway safety, and evaluate DOT's use of such measures to inform its management the State Highway Program; and
- determine the extent to which DOT has implemented relevant recommendations made in our past audit reports.

I hope you find this information helpful. If you have any additional questions regarding this proposed audit, please contact me.

JC/DS/cb

cc: Senator Mary Lazich  
Senator Alberta Darling  
Senator Kathleen Vinehout  
Senator Janet Bewley

Representative John Macco  
Representative John Nygren  
Representative Melissa Sargent  
Representative Terese Berceau

Mark Gottlieb, Secretary  
Department of Transportation