

NOTICE OF PROPOSED GUIDANCE DOCUMENT

Connector June 2018 newsletter

Pursuant to Wis. Stat. s. 227.112, the Wisconsin Department of Transportation is hereby seeking comment on Connector Aug 2018 newsletter [Wis. Stat. ch. 346], a proposed guidance document.

PUBLIC COMMENTS AND DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION

Comments may be submitted to the Wisconsin Department of Transportation for 21 days by:

1. Department's website: <https://appengine.egov.com/apps/wi/dot/guidance-docs?guidDocId=OPA165>

2. Mailing written comments to:
Office of Public Affairs
Wisconsin Department of Transportation
4822 Madison Yards Way
PO Box 7910
Madison, WI 53707-7910

WEBSITE LOCATION OF FINAL GUIDANCE DOCUMENT

The final version of this guidance document will be posted at wisconsin.dot.gov to allow for ongoing comment.

AGENCY CONTACT

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State of Wisconsin Department of Transportation

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Middle school students script, film, produce commercial on distracted driving dangers

Claire Franken - August 7

During the summer months, Wisconsin sees a spike in distracted driving crashes.

Distractions affect all drivers, but this issue becomes most prevalent when teenagers are

behind the wheel.

Over the past five summers, teen drivers in Wisconsin were involved in an average of 13 distracted driving crashes daily.

To help combat this troubling trend, Wisconsin DOT is sponsoring a new [anti-distracted driving message](#) airing on TV stations statewide to urge drivers to think twice about their driving habits this summer.

The 30-second PSA was created by middle school students at Milwaukee Indian Community School. The Wisconsin DOT Inter-Tribal Task Force One Day Media Camp helped prepare students to script, film and produce the video all in one school day. The camp was created to spur discussion about safety among Native American communities because they are among those at highest risk to be involved in a fatal motor crash. "We saw something that was affecting people in our own community, so we wanted to try to make change," said Arianna Fuller, who acted as a quarreling passenger in the back of her mother's vehicle for the commercial.

The students say they have also witnessed distracted driving as passengers and want to urge drivers to be more conscious of safe driving behaviors. Student Katera Cannon said she recalls times as a passenger when the driver was distracted while talking on a phone.

"We didn't crash but we did swerve, which was scary enough."

While the PSA was initially intended to enhance safety discussions in tribal communities, the students' message quickly gained widespread attention and praise. The campaign highlights the dangerous consequences of distracted driving. Whether fiddling with the radio, fighting in the car or talking on the phone, all can be tempting drivers. With nearly 6,000 distracted driving crashes involving teenagers in Wisconsin during the past five years, these students hope their message will reach beyond their own communities and that drivers will listen.

"The commercial has definitely made me think twice about distracted driving," said Fuller's father Brent Reiter. "I've become more committed to being conscious of my driving habits and giving the road my undivided attention to keep my family and others on the road safe."

Distracted driving has time and again proven to have serious negative effects. Of the 5,968 teenage distracted driving crashes reviewed in the summer months of 2013-2017, more than 1,949 led to injuries and 11 were fatal. Families' lives have changed from single, momentary glances away from the road. These students are trying to change that behavior by urging drivers to leave the phone alone until they get home, especially during the summer months known as the "100 deadliest days."

"You can call it a tragedy, a shame or a nightmare, but there are no words to fully describe the loss of a loved one in a traffic crash," Wisconsin State Patrol Superintendent JD Lind said. "One death is one too many, and we're encouraged to see this group of dedicated young people trying to do something about it."

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Milwaukee Indian Community middle school student Ariana Fuller speaks to news reporters during a media event in Deforest, Wisconsin. Fuller was joined by Wisconsin State Patrol Superintendent J.D. Lind, Wisconsin DOT Secretary Dave Ross and her fellow students.

St. Croix Crossing Loop Trail promotes healthy lifestyles, environment, communities

Cole White - August 7

The St. Croix Loop Trail is a 4.7-mile-long bike and pedestrian path spanning the [St. Croix Crossing](#) and Stillwater Lift Bridge. The trail connecting Northwestern Wisconsin with Stillwater, Minnesota, leads its users through the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway, a national park enriched by the forested landscapes and wilderness of the northern Midwest. After opening for partial use last summer, the full trail is scheduled for a Summer 2019 completion.

The Loop Trail's construction is part of the St. Croix Crossing project, a bridge-building endeavor headed by the Wisconsin and Minnesota departments of transportation. The larger bridge project includes an environmental mitigation plan within which the Loop Trail falls. The plan is a system of improvements to local infrastructure working with the new bridge design. It includes a series of improvements to help enhance local businesses and traffic, and daily lives of area residents.



Beyond nature

St. Croix Crossing Project Manager Beth Cunningham urged the importance of the environmental mitigation plan, stressing that the project's definition of the "environment" involves much more than nature.

"Both the social and natural environment must be protected," said Cunningham. "Environmental mitigation includes both of these aspects." Protecting the environment comprehensively, she says, requires careful consideration of how the Loop Trail's construction will affect stakeholders and natural resources.

Another characteristic of the environmental mitigation effort is historic resource preservation. This includes rehabilitating Stillwater's old lift bridge for pedestrian use, rehabilitation of the St. Croix Overlook and plans for optimizing parking lots near businesses in the area. Cunningham stresses that these considerations help businesses absorb changes that come from long-term construction projects while working to preserve city institutions.

The trail carries a host of health benefits as people have a place to get in a daily walk, run or bike ride while taking in the beautiful scenery.

Community involvement

Design plans for the Loop Trail and other environmental mitigation items require input from dozens of stakeholder groups and community members. Bridge construction projects often shift traffic patterns that affect businesses and residents, so community input and approval throughout the process is important.

A prominent stakeholder and proponent of the Loop Trail project is the [St. Croix Bike and Pedestrian Coalition](#), an organization that has emphasized trail-building and healthy lifestyles since their start four and a half years ago. The Coalition's mission is to advocate for a connected network of trails on both the Wisconsin and Minnesota sides of the border. Their hope is that the Loop Trail will

encourage communities to advocate for further expansion and interconnection of regional trail systems.

The trail design incorporated a system of community-funded improvements to be developed along the trail through single or recurrent donations. These improvements help to beautify the landscape as well as provide valuable services. Improvements include interpretive panels to teach trail goers about the St. Croix River Valley, bicycle aid and repair stations, water bottle fillers, pet stations and other resources to encourage trail traffic. Susan Heuser, secretary of the St. Croix Bike and Pedestrian Coalition, says that "the trail will become a must visit site for an expected large number of regional residents and tourists alike."

Another community-building endeavor Heuser emphasizes is the series of art benches to be placed along the trail. According to Heuser, these art benches are part of a larger project that spans along the St. Croix River. The nearby Houlton Elementary School plans to use these art benches for gatherings, classes and school events. The art featured on these benches is created by Kim Murphy and Jim Shoop, local artists who work with students from the elementary school to create art made of materials indigenous to the St. Croix River Valley.

Ultimately, the trail strives to be a hub of activity for all people to enjoy. Affording opportunities for locals to contribute to the trail with their own resources is an excellent way to make them feel invested in the trail's well-being, and the improvements being made will improve the quality of the trail.

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WisDOT's research program continues to receive national acclaim

Andrew Eiter - August 1

For the second year in a row, a Wisconsin DOT research program project has been voted into the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials' (AASHTO) "Sweet Sixteen" of the highest-value state transportation research nationwide.

The project, [Critical Factors Affecting Asphalt Concrete Durability](#), is expected to save the state \$25 million annually by extending the life of thousands of miles of newly constructed roads, according to Wisconsin DOT Chief Materials Engineer Barry Paye.

"The Wisconsin DOT research program focuses on practical, applied research to seek legitimate and attainable improvements for construction projects," said Paye. "We optimize results by testing new strategies in a lab, with minimal risk, and then use that information to complete large-scale projects."

Last year, the Recycled Materials Resource Center pooled-fund project, a cooperative, multi-state effort lead by Wisconsin DOT and the University of Wisconsin-Madison, won the same award for its potential to save millions and reduce the environmental impacts of infrastructure construction.



A paving crew working on the WIS 21 enhanced density pilot project demonstrates how density targets may be increased. The idea that higher density leads to improved performance results from the Critical Factors Affecting Asphalt Concrete Durability project.

“These projects only scratch the surface of the research program’s efforts to support Wisconsin DOT’s culture of data-driven decision making and to implement promising policies, materials and technologies,” said Paye.

The research program sponsors and participates in dozens of research projects through its four major components: the Wisconsin Highway Research Program (WHRP); policy research program; participation in the Transportation Pooled Fund Program; and participation in the national programs of the Transportation Research Board (TRB), National Cooperative Highway Research Program (NCHRP) and AASHTO.

Established in 1998, in collaboration with UW – Madison, WHRP aims to discover cost-effective ways to build and maintain Wisconsin’s highways and bridges. Academia, industry partners and Wisconsin DOT staff work together to develop research projects, provide guidance to researchers and oversee the projects’ timely completion and implementation of results. WHRP currently sponsors 24 active projects ranging from performance-engineered concrete mixtures to bridge deck protection. Last year, a WHRP project on bridge overlays received national recognition for its potential to reduce lane closure times during repairs and increase pavement lifespan by several years.

Wisconsin DOT’s participation in the Transportation Pooled Fund Program allows the department to work with other states to perform research of joint interest. Pooling funds and expertise makes each dollar go further towards achieving complex research goals. Wisconsin DOT currently leads three projects and participates in 42 others. The award-winning Recycled Materials Resource Center has been so successful that a new pooled fund project was created to extend it for a fourth generation.

Wisconsin DOT supports the national initiatives of TRB, NCHRP and AASHTO through staff submitting research problem statements, and serving on technical committees and project oversight panels. Approximately 80 Wisconsin DOT staff play at least one role on 125 national research panels or committees.

The state of Wisconsin pays less than 20 percent of the \$4 million research budget, while federal funding covers the rest, making the state’s return on investment even greater.

“The research program benefits the entire state. Saving money on one project allows for money to be spent on other projects that improve the overall health of the transportation system,” said Paye.

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