



January 17th, 2024

Senator Tomczyk, Chair

Senator Cowles, Vice-Chair

Members of the Senate Committee on Transportation and Local Government

Testimony on 2023 Senate Bill 753

Relating to: supervision of local bridge projects funded under certain local bridge maintenance programs

Dear Chairman Tomczyk and Committee Members:

For decades, Wisconsin townships have utilized two local infrastructure programs together to help refurbish seriously deteriorating bridges:

s. 84.18 Local Bridge Program – Allows townships to get state funds for 80% of the cost of the project

s. 82.08 Petition for county aid – Allows townships to petition the county for 50% of the cost of construction or repair of any bridge or culvert on or connected to a town highway

Townships would initially receive the 80% state funding for the project, and then they would split the remaining 20% between themselves and their county. This funding structure allowed townships to rapidly repair failing bridges that otherwise would have to wait years to be fixed.

Unfortunately, it came to light early last year in an Attorney General opinion that this longstanding practice may in fact not be legal. Townships have since had to postpone crucial projects as their projected construction costs increased substantially.

Senate Bill 753 seeks to address this oversight by codifying into statute the precedent that the two programs can be used together to help cover local bridge projects. This move would allow failing bridges to be repaired in an accelerated fashion without fear of ballooning township budgets.

Thank you again for your time. I am happy to take any questions.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jesse James'.

Senator Jesse James
23rd Senate District