



To: All Legislators

Date: April 4, 2023

Re: Support Rural Economic Development and Wisconsin's Food Supply Chain – Co-sponsor LRB-2553/1 and 2631/1: Creating the Agriculture Road Improvement Program (ARIP)

We write to you today to strongly encourage you to co-sponsor LRB 2553 and 2631 creating the Agricultural Road Improvement Program at the Department of Transportation (DOT).

Crumbling infrastructure in rural Wisconsin and the resulting road weight restrictions, requirements to use alternative routes or carry partial load have been compounded by driver shortages and higher fuel prices. The result is serious infrastructure challenges restricting our agricultural economy and we have further strained the food supply chain. The impacts that events globally and locally have had on the food supply chain are on display every day at the grocery store. Most causes of inflation are beyond our control at the state level, but we can impact hidden costs for consumers by addressing critical road infrastructure in rural Wisconsin.

Farmers' biggest hurdle to getting their products to market is often the road at the end of their driveway. The proposed \$150 million program would provide much-needed relief to agricultural users and the local governments charged with maintaining these facilities.

Improvements to local roads and the elimination of posted routes will benefit all rural road users. The eligibility to provide funding to repair or replace structures under twenty feet in length (*i.e.*, under the threshold for the use of federal funds) would complement the newly available federal revenue for local bridges and will help speed the modernization of our local transportation networks.

As one Chippewa County farmer recently put it, "The loads aren't too heavy for our roads, it's the other way around... Our roads aren't heavy enough for our loads." Agriculture is a \$107 billion per year industry in Wisconsin. Our farmers feed our communities and the world. The availability of one-time revenue from the state surplus means we can make this critical investment without taking away from other budget funding priorities.

We hope you will join us in supporting this program and we encourage you to contact us with any questions.

Sincerely,

AgCounty Farm Credit Services
Compeer Financial
Cooperative Network
CropLife America
Dairy Business Association
GreenStone Farm Credit Services
League of Wisconsin Municipalities
MidWest Food Products Association, Inc.
Venture Dairy Cooperative
Wisconsin Agri-Business Association
Wisconsin Association of Professional
Agricultural Consultants
Wisconsin BioFuels Association
Wisconsin Cattlemen's Association
Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association
Wisconsin Corn Growers Association
Wisconsin Counties Association
Wisconsin Dairy Alliance

Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation
Wisconsin Farm Credit Services
Wisconsin Grocers Association
Wisconsin Hemp Alliance
Wisconsin Horse Council
Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce
Wisconsin Milk Haulers Association
Wisconsin Motor Carriers Association
Wisconsin Pork Association
Wisconsin Potato & Vegetable Growers
Wisconsin Soybean Association
Wisconsin State Cranberry Growers
Association
Wisconsin Towns Association
Wisconsin Transportation Builders
Association