

New Federal Funding for Work Zone Safety

Written by GOV Press Wisconsin
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SMART Grants Program will enable WisDOT install new technology to keep drivers informed in work zones and better protect the people working behind the barrels.

MADISON — Gov. Tony Evers, together with the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT), today announced the state received two federal grants to develop innovations to enhance work zone safety in Wisconsin. Funding is available through the first round of the new federal Strengthening Mobility and Revolutionizing Transportation (SMART) Grants Program established by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL). The U.S. Department of Transportation announced the SMART Grants Program recipients [last week](#).



“Investing in our transportation system and building the 21st-century infrastructure our state needs have been priorities for our administration since Day One,” said Gov. Evers. “These new federal funds will enable WisDOT to be at the forefront of innovation and help us to develop advanced technology that will protect workers and have a direct, positive impact on our communities.”

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WisDOT, in collaboration with the Colorado, Minnesota, and Oklahoma Departments of Transportation, will advance transportation safety by developing technology for a prototype autonomous truck-mounted attenuator (ATMA) to shield maintenance and construction workers from errant drivers. The ATMA is a crash cushion attached to the rear of a vehicle to absorb the impact of a crash. This project will receive over \$1.8 million from the grant.

“Improving overall work zone safety requires a comprehensive, safe system approach,” said WisDOT Secretary Craig Thompson. “These grant awards will help us accelerate the pace of implementing new technology to keep drivers informed in work zones and better protect the people working behind the barrels as we improve Wisconsin's transportation system.”

Wisconsin will also receive \$250,000 to extend the Work Zone Data Exchange (WZDx) to the local road network using smart work zone devices. WZDx incorporates real-time information on road conditions, such as lane closures in work zones, and shares the data through the 511 Wisconsin Traveler Information System at 511wi.gov and via the mobile app. WisDOT already tracks 12,000 scheduled work zone events annually on Wisconsin state highways, but the WZDx data feed currently does not include work zones on the local road network.

This funding will help WisDOT purchase additional smart zone devices, such as connected arrow boards or connected location markers. Successful testing of these devices could have potential benefits to expand work zone data statewide. Real-time traffic information can help human drivers and automated driving systems (ADS) navigate more safely and efficiently through work zones across Wisconsin.

The next funding opportunity of \$100 million through the SMART Grants Program is expected to be released in fall 2023. Funds may be available to eligible cities or communities for demonstration projects that incorporate innovative transportation technologies or the use of data, including coordinated automation, connected vehicles, and intelligent sensor-based infrastructure. Successful SMART grant proposals should demonstrate an understanding of local needs and expand purpose-driven innovation.

WisDOT has tools to help communities find and apply for the highly-competitive funding opportunities available through this and other federal discretionary grants at wisconsindot.gov/BIL.

Background information and an interactive map depicting all SMART projects can be found [here](#).