

Wisconsin Towns Association

March 2026



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Shawano, WI 54166

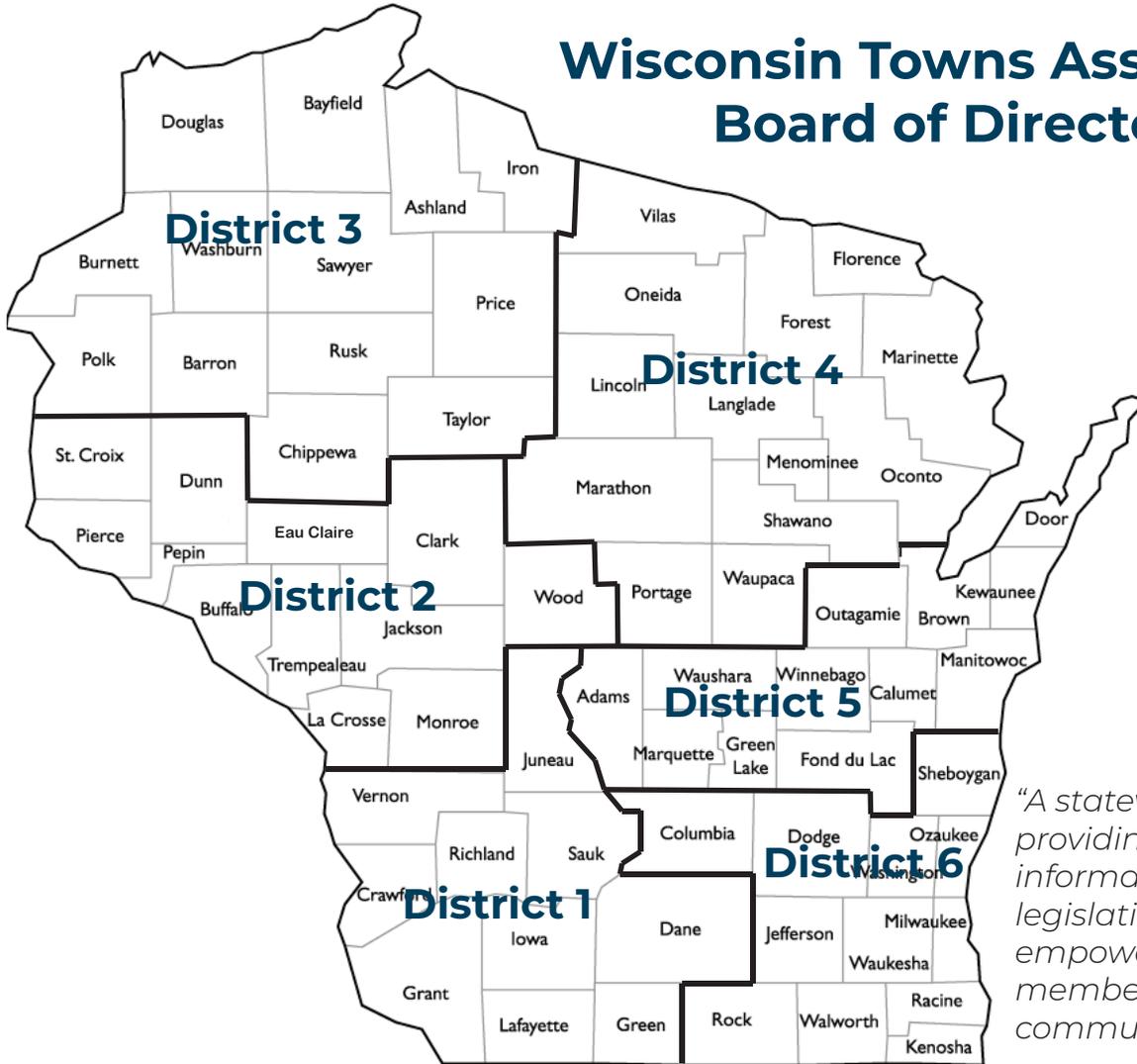
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Wisconsin Towns Association Board of Directors



"A statewide association providing education, legal information and grassroots legislative advocacy to empower and inspire our members to lead in their communities."



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Volume 457

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The publication *Wisconsin Towns* is published by the Wisconsin Towns Association at W7686 Co. Rd. MMM, Shawano WI 54166
715.526.3157
Third Class Postage Paid at Shawano, WI

Wisconsin Towns

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Empowering Town Officials

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

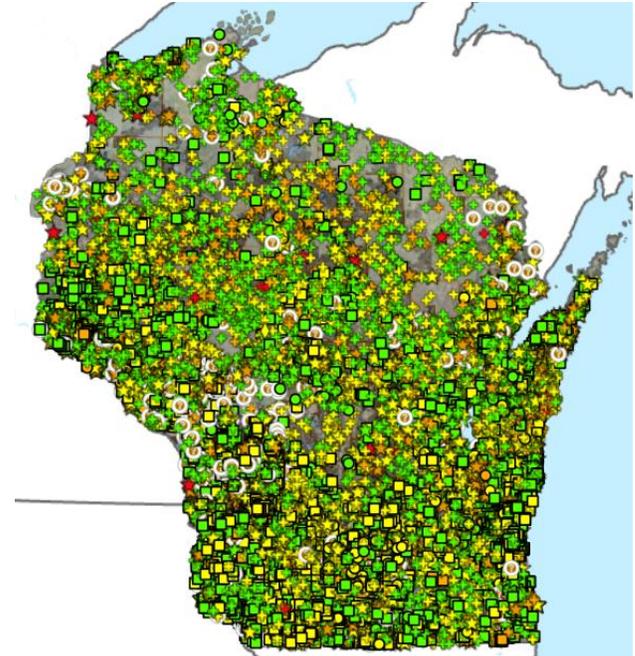


By
Mike Koles

Small Bridge Program Announced

On February 5th, the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) rolled out the Local Small Structures Improvement Program (LSSIP). This is a new grant program to assist local governments with the replacement of deteriorating small bridges that are over 6 feet but no greater than 20 feet in span.

As you might know, the WTA worked with the Legislature and Governor Evers to secure \$30 million in the 2025-27 state budget for this purpose. The LSSIP follows the recently completed inventory and assessment of 6-to-20-foot small bridges statewide, which WTA also worked to secure \$12.5 million in the 2023-25 state budget to accomplish. Until January 1, 2026, Wisconsin had no idea how many small bridges existed, where they were, or what condition they were in. Yikes!



This map reveals the over 17,000 structures statewide

The inventory and assessment revealed that Wisconsin has over 17,000 small bridges and that nearly 10% are in severe or poor condition. **The condition of over 100 structures demands immediate shut down, hampering the local economy but at least ensuring safety.** You read that right. Absent the creation of the inventory and assessment program, school buses, manure haulers, and emergency service vehicles were traveling over 100 critically unsafe small bridges.

The LSSIP is intended to be an important first step in addressing the most urgent needs identified through that process. While the initial \$30 million will not address all structural needs statewide, it represents meaningful progress and lays a foundation for continued investment.

Under the new Local Small Structure Improvement Program (LSSIP), eligible projects

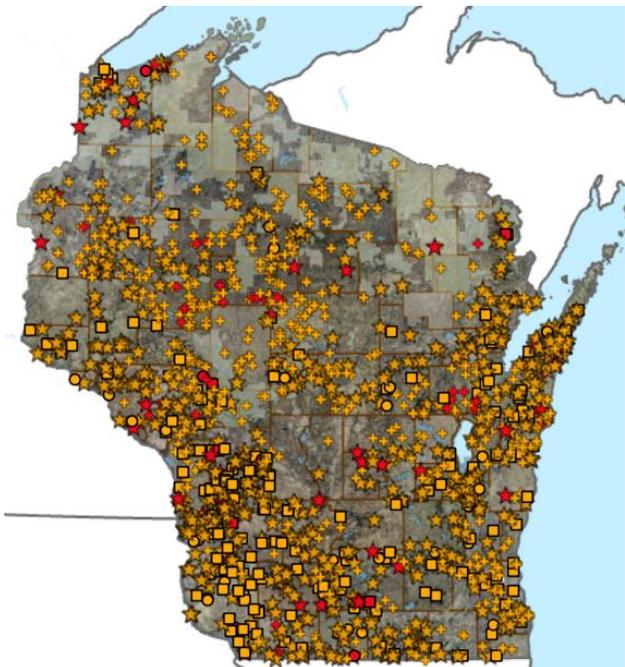


This bridge is shut down in a Marinette County town.

may receive reimbursement of up to 90% of total project costs, with a 10% local cost share. As of the writing of this article, we have asked WisDOT if the 10% local cost share can include a 5% match from the county bridge aid program. When we get an answer, we'll make sure to communicate that to you.

Additional information is available on WisDOT's LSSIP webpage, which is currently linked via our rotating home page banner on our website. Application materials, instructions, and information on each of your inventoried structures, including condition ratings, are available, along with an interactive statewide structure map. **The application deadline is 5:00 p.m. on Friday, May 1, 2026.** Structures rated 0 - 4 are eligible, with funding priority focused on the most critical structures first (e.g., 1 rated structures will be funded before 2 rated structures).

By the time you are reading this article, we expect that WisDOT will have conducted and recorded a webinar or two that you'll be able to access on their LSSIP webpage.



This map reveals the over 1,600 severe/poor structures

Adopt your Transportation Resolutions!

For those reading this after attending a District Meeting, the following serves as a reminder. For others who were unable to make it or have yet to attend, below is a small nugget of information that you can learn more detail about by attending an upcoming in person or virtual district meeting.

The gist of the message is that the WTA, along with a number of other transportation stakeholders who created the "Just Fix It" campaign a decade ago, are embarking on a new transportation funding advocacy effort. We need your help to ensure a long term, sustainable solution to transportation funding is accomplished.

Prior to Just Fix It, transportation funding had been stagnant for quite some time. Through your efforts and the advocacy of WTA and other partners, the Just Fix It campaign helped influence Wisconsin's policymakers to invest significant funding into Wisconsin's transportation infrastructure in the last ten years. For example:

- Increased funding in both the Entitlement and Discretionary components of the Local Road Improvement Program (LRIP)
- Creation of the \$100 million LRIP – Supplemental, which has been funded four consecutive biennia
- Creation of the \$150 million Agriculture Road Improvement Program in the 2023-25 biennium, which was funded at \$120 million in the 2025-27 biennium
- Creation of the \$12.5 million small bridge inventory and inspection program followed by the \$30 million Local Small Structure Improvement Program.

- 42% increase (\$902/mile) in general transportation aids.

Unfortunately, due to generational inflation levels, the substantial investment has resulted in effectively no increase (but also no decrease) in town PASER ratings, i.e., the condition of town roads. Bottom line, the Just Fix It campaign and resulting policymaker leadership helped **stop the decline of town infrastructure.**

Unfortunately, this progress has, in part, been funded through general purpose revenues (GPR) instead of segregated transportation revenue (SEG). GPR is generated primarily by income and sales tax and can be spent on any number of “general” purposes. SEG is generated primarily through gas tax and transportation related fees (e.g., vehicle registration). Segregated transportation revenue can only be spent on transportation.

Due to consistent large state funding surpluses over multiple biennia, Wisconsin policymakers have been afforded the opportunity to use GPR to fund transportation. In the 2027-29 biennium, \$580 million in GPR was used to fund transportation. When – NOT IF – state budget surpluses cease, GPR will only be available if transportation can successfully take it away from Medicare/Medicaid; K-12, prisons, the UW System, and shared revenue. Historically, transportation has lost out to all of the above. Simply, medication for the sick, books for kids, and putting away the bad guys has taken priority over filling potholes.

Between the needs to: 1) address the aforementioned GPR problem; 2) keep up with inflation; and, 3) address multiple generational

projects on the interstates, the transportation deficit heading into the 2027-29 biennium is projected to be in excess of \$1 billion. That’s why we’re embarking on a second major effort similar to Just Fix It.

There is not enough room in this magazine edition to provide all of the details, but let me make two very important asks of you. **First**, please have your town board adopt the transportation funding resolution that was handed out at District Meetings and is available on our website under the legislative tab by then clicking on legislative priorities. We ask that you adopt this by the end of April and email them to wtowns@wisctowns.com with

“...the transportation deficit heading into the 2027-29 biennium is projected to be in excess of \$1 billion.”

the subject line “Road Resolution.” If you miss the April deadline, no worries. Please send it in anyway. **Second**, please attend one of six candidate and legislator transportation forums sponsored by the Transportation Development Association (TDA) and dubbed **Turnout for Transportation Roundtables**. The dates and locations are Appleton (5/14), La Crosse (5/18), Eau Claire (5/19), Wausau (5/20), Oak Creek (5/27), and Janesville (5/28). The roundtables will be held from 7:30am to 9:00am. There is no charge for this event, but registration is required. A free breakfast is included. More information can be found on the Transportation Development Association website at <https://tdawisconsin.org/2026-regional-turnout-for-transportation-roundtables/>

March Dues Mailing

Member dues invoices are mailed via USPS in mid-March. The invoices were provided in draft form last Fall and include more detail than in the past. Please make sure to follow instructions, **including sending in the remittance form that is at the bottom of the invoice.**



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✉ Dan: hwype@wwt.net

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✉ Gary: hwygaryk@gmail.com

✉ Emmer: emmer.w.shields@gmail.com



Annual Town Meeting FAQs

Q. When is the annual town meeting held?

A. Pursuant to Wis. Stat. § 60.11(2)(a), the default date for the annual town meeting is the third Tuesday in April which is **April 21st** this year. In some cases, the electors at last year's annual town meeting might have set a different date for this year's annual town meeting. If that was done, the different date must fall within the 10 days *after* the third Tuesday in April. See Wis. Stat. § 60.11(2)(b)(1). The annual meeting can never be held prior to the third Tuesday in April. Note also that the town board itself cannot change the annual town meeting date to something other than the default date. So, for example, if an improper date (such as April 20th or May 2nd) was selected last year, the board would need to move the annual meeting this year to April 21st in order to comply with the statutory timing requirements.

If a town does not wish to proceed with the full meeting on the third Tuesday in April (or the later date within 10 days after as set by the electors at the previous year's annual meeting), the annual meeting must still be called to order on the meeting date. Those present may then vote to adjourn the meeting to a later date within 30 days after the original meeting date. See Wis. Stat. § 60.11(4). To accomplish this, after the annual meeting is called to order, there needs to be a motion and majority vote to adjourn to a specified date and time within 30 days.

Q. I have been hearing from some town electors that they would like to attend the annual meeting via Zoom or some other virtual platform. They feel the town should do more to accommodate people who travel for work or have second homes in other locations. Is this something that the board can or should consider offering?

A. The laws that pertain to the town annual meeting do not contemplate virtual or telephone attendance. So, there is no definitely no state law that would require a town to comply with such a request. Even if the town is open to the idea, allowing remote attendance could prove problematic. What if the electors present at the meeting vote to use paper ballots to conduct a vote? What if the electors vote to require a poll list under Wis. Stat. § 60.11(7) and expect attendees to sign in at the meeting? The law does not provide answers to these questions. So, to avoid potential problems, it is best to require in person attendance at town elector meetings. Furthermore, the statutes do not allow for absentee or proxy voting at town elector meetings.

Q. How do we provide public notice for the annual town meeting?

A. If the town's annual meeting is being held on the 3rd Tuesday of April in the same location as last year, no public notice is technically required, Wis. Stat. § 60.11(3) & (5). However, if the town electors at last year's annual meeting picked a date for this year's annual meeting within the 10 days *after* the third Tuesday in April or a new meeting time or location will be used, a Class 2 notice under ch. 985 is required. See Wis. Stat. §§ 60.11(5) & 60.12(3). Towns without official newspapers have two options for providing this notice.

1. **By Paid Newspaper Publication:** If this method is used, the first notice must be published in a newspaper at least 15 and not more than 20 days before the meeting and the second notice must be published at least one week prior to the meeting.
2. **By Posting:** In lieu of publication, towns may post their annual meeting notice in three (3) public places or post the notice in one physical location and a town-maintained website. Notices must be posted at least 15 days and not more than 20 days in advance of the meeting and left up until the meeting.

Please note that even if notice is not legally required for a town's annual meeting because it is being held on the third Tuesday in April at the same time and location as the previous year, the WTA strongly encourages towns to publish or post notice with your planned agenda items to encourage attendance.

Q. Who chairs the annual meeting?

A. The town chair chairs the annual meeting. If the chairperson is not available, another town board member may chair the meeting. If there are no town board members available to chair the meeting, the electors who are present may select a chair from amongst themselves. Wis. Stat. § 60.13(1)(a).

Q. Who is responsible for taking minutes at the annual meeting?

A. The town clerk is responsible for taking minutes. See Wis. Stat. § 60.15. If the town clerk is not available, then the deputy clerk is responsible for taking meeting minutes. If a deputy clerk is not available, the town meeting chairperson must select someone to be the clerk of the meeting. Elector meeting minutes must be signed by the town clerk (or person assigned to take the minutes) and filed in the office of the town clerk within 5 days after the elector meeting.

Q. Can the town electors vote on anything binding during the annual meeting?

A. It's important for the board members to review Wis. Stat. § 60.10 before the meeting. Items under (1) are binding such as setting the pay for elected town officials. Items under (2) are mostly grants of authority that the board would need to take various actions such as building a town building or buying town land and (3) consists of grants of authority to appropriate money for certain limited purposes. Grants of authority provide permission to act, but do not place binding mandates on the board.

Q. Who may vote at an annual meeting?

A. Only qualified "electors" may vote at an annual meeting. See Wis. Stat. § 60.14(1). A qualified elector must be at least 18 years old, a town resident, and eligible to vote in regular town elections pursuant to Chapter 6 of Wisconsin Statutes. See Wis. Stat. § 6.03. An elector does not have to be registered to vote in order to be eligible to vote at the annual meeting and while an elector must be a town resident, he or she is not required to own property in the town. Finally, non-residents who own property in the town are not permitted to vote. However, the chair may allow non-residents to speak during the meeting.

Q. If there is proper action taken by the electors at the annual meeting, what are the next steps? When do they take effect?

A. The town clerk must post or publish all resolutions, motions, and other actions taken by the town electors within 30 days of any town elector meeting. See Wis. Stat. § 60.80(1)(a). The items posted will take effect the day after publication or posting unless there is a later date expressly provided in the resolution, motion, or action. Salary changes for elected officials are unique, and any changes made at the annual meeting don't take effect until the start of the next term of office. See Wis. Stat. § 60.32.



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Wisconsin Towns Association Town Road School 2026

Chula Vista Resort and Conference Center
Wisconsin Dells, WI

Monday April 27 – Wednesday April 29, 2026

WHO: Local Government Elected Officials, Road Workers, Road Superintendents, Public Works Directors, Engineers, Contractors, anyone involved in constructing and maintaining town roads and village streets.

WHAT: Attendees will learn about specific products and techniques from the private sector. The plethora of new transportation programs, including Transportation Funding and Legislative Priorities, Transportation Plans, Paser Ratings, LRIP Updates, will be reviewed. Road workers will obtain flagger certification. A rich opportunity to network with fellow officials and service providers will be provided. Top all of that off with some fun, food, and support of the WTA scholarship program.

REGISTRATION: See form in magazine or register online at www.wisctowns.com. Registration deadline is April 3, 2026.

HOTEL RESERVATIONS: A room block is available at the Chula Vista. The hotel room reservation deadline is April 3, 2026. To make a room reservation, please contact the reservation department at (833) 459-5638. The booking ID number is L03884. The room block is reserved under the Wisconsin Towns Association (WTA). Room rates per night are \$101.00 single; \$129 double; \$239 for a 2-bedroom condo, \$369 for a 3-bedroom condo. To receive your tax exemption, please email billing@chulavistaresort.com and provide a copy of your tax exempt certificate and your confirmation number no later than several weeks prior to arrival.



AUCTION: WTA provides ten \$1,500 scholarships to Wisconsin graduating seniors annually. Have some fun and help support the program by participating or donating. The auction will begin at 5:00pm on Tuesday, April 28. Towns are encouraged to consider donating an item or a package of items of approximately \$50 in value that highlights your region of the state. Towns donating items will be recognized when your item is auctioned. For questions about the auction, please contact Gary Kennedy at 920-323-6500 or hwygaryk@gmail.com.

Wisconsin Towns Association Town Road School 2026

Chula Vista Resort and Conference Center - Wisconsin Dells, WI
Monday April 27 - Wednesday April 29, 2026

Registration

Register before April 3 - \$199.00 Town Official
Register before April 3 - \$125.00 Spouse/Guest
OR
Register after April 3 - \$299.00 Town Official
Register after April 3 - \$225 Spouse/Guest

Registration includes all meals, workshops and events.
Please select which you will attend below.

Name:	Office/Position:
Town:	County:
Spouse/Guest Name:	
Address:	
Email:	Phone:
Amount Enclosed: \$	

<i>*Must be completed to register.</i>	Yes	No
Tuesday Breakfast		
Tuesday Lunch		
Transportation Service Provider Reception		
Wednesday Breakfast		

Mail completed form and payment to WTA, W7686 Co. Rd. MMM, Shawano, WI 54166
or
Register online at www.wisctowns.com.

Cancellation Policy:

Cancellations received 10 days or more in advance of the start of the meeting will receive a full refund less a \$15.00 administrative fee. Cancellations received less than 10 days in advance of the start of the meeting will be charged a \$15.00 administrative fee plus the cost of food. Refund requests submitted 30 or more days after the event will not be processed.

Wisconsin Towns Association

Town Road School 2026

Chula Vista Resort and Conference Center - Wisconsin Dells, WI
Monday April 27 – Wednesday April 29, 2026

Agenda

MONDAY, APRIL 27, 2026

5:00 – 6:00pm **REGISTRATION** (you must be registered to attend – thank you)

6:00 – 10:00pm **NETWORKING ROUNDTABLE**

Location: Follow Signs

This is a can't miss evening of networking opportunities with fellow local officials, road workers, and private sector transportation service providers. Join us in one of four hospitality rooms sponsored by Cedar, Sherwin Industries, Scott Construction & Contech complete with free heavy hors d'oeuvres and refreshments.

TUESDAY, APRIL 28, 2026

6:30 – 8:00am **BREAKFAST - COMPLIMENTARY BUFFET**

Location: Conference Rooms A through I

Freshly cut fruit, muffins and breakfast breads, orange & apple juices, freshly brewed regular and decaffeinated coffee, and hot teas. Eggs, smoked bacon, sausage patties and breakfast potatoes. Sponsored by: **Paladin Project Management Group, LLC**

8:00am **VENDOR EXHIBITS & REGISTRATION OPEN**

9:00 – 9:15am **WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS**

Location: Grand Ballroom

Mike Koles, Wisconsin Towns Association, Executive Director

9:15 – 9:45am **SECRETARY'S UPDATE ON WISDOT (PDH'S 0.5)**

Location: Grand Ballroom

An overview of major projects in 2026 and ongoing efforts to improve safety – including targeted training on work zone safety and work zone safety pilots – specifically in rural areas.

Kristina Boardman, WisDOT Secretary

TUESDAY, APRIL 28, 2026 (continued)

9:45 - 10:30am 6 - 20 FOOT SMALL BRIDGE INVENTORY & INSPECTION PROGRAM UPDATE (PDH's 0.75)

Location: Grand Ballroom

The inventory and inspection phases of the small bridge program is complete. The focus now is on what this all means and what is going to get funded.

Josh Dietsche, WisDOT Director Bureau of Structures
Merrill Mechler-Hickson, WisDOT Local Roads Programs & Finance Section Chief
Debby Jackson, Transportation Development Association

10:30 - 11:15am NETWORKING INTERSECTION

Location: Conference Rooms A through I

Take a break and visit the Town Transportation Service Providers in the Vendor Exhibit Area.

11:15am - 12:00pm *OPTION A* 2025-26 LEGISLATIVE SESSION REVIEW: BUDGET AND POLICY OUTCOMES (PDH'S 0.75)

Location: Grand Ballroom

The 2025-26 Wisconsin legislative session has come to a close. What happened? What didn't happen? What might happen in the future?

Joe Ruth, Wisconsin Towns Association, Governmental Affairs Director

11:15am - 12:00pm *OPTION B* 6 - 20' Structure Solutions (PDH's 0.75)

Location: Upper Grand Ballroom

This session will feature solutions and opportunities for your small bridge projects now that the inventory and inspections are completed.

Keith Johnson and Eric Strum, Bridge Consultants, Contech Solutions

12:00 - 1:30pm LUNCH AND VENDOR VISITS

Location: Conference Rooms A through I

Visit with vendors after enjoying sauteed chicken breast, lightly dusted with Italian herbs and topped with Parmesan and marinara. Served over fettuccine.

Sponsored by: H.G. Meigs, Inc., Crack Filling Services, and Ayres Associates

1:30 - 2:15pm *OPTION A* FROM PASER TO YOUR CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN (PDH's 0.75)

Location: Grand Ballroom

You just completed your 2025 PASER rating update, and the urgency for new road projects has become apparent. Fortunately, new opportunities for grant funding may await. Now is the perfect time to complete a 5-year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). The PASER ratings are a numeric snapshot in time of the condition of your road infrastructure. But pavement ratings are just one piece of the puzzle. This session will provide an overview of how to integrate PASER ratings along with other asset management data/tools such as the 6-20 structure assessments to create a CIP to better prepare your Town for future funding opportunities.

Ken Jaworski, Brian Udovich and Nicole Barbiaux, Cedar Corporation

TUESDAY, APRIL 28, 2026 (continued)

1:30 – 2:15pm **OPTION B GRANTS: HOW TO SEARCH FOR, WRITE, AND ADMINISTER (PDH's 0.75)**

Location: Upper Grand Ballroom

This session provides a practical, step-by-step introduction to the full grants lifecycle. Participants will learn how to craft a compelling Grant Story, identify and evaluate funding opportunities, and use Artificial Intelligence tools to streamline grant searches and support the development of strong, competitive applications. The session will also highlight essential strategies for effective grant administration.

Daniel Foth, UW-Madison/Extension Local Government Center

2:30 – 3:15pm **OPTION A Awarded a TRI, TRID or TRIS Project, What are the next steps? (PDH's 0.75)**

Location: Grand Ballroom

From SMA to advertisement to reimbursement and everything in between.

Dan Fedderly and Mark Servi, Paladin Project Management Group LLC

2:30 – 3:15pm **OPTION B LIQUID APPLICATIONS (PDH's 0.75)**

Location: Upper Grand Ballroom

Options for Prewet, Anti-icing, Salt Brine, and Additives. The differences between deicing and anti-icing, the differences between prewetting and anti-icing (and direct spray deicing). Discussion about basic application equipment and truck mounted tank information.

Jack Fieweger, Force America

3:15 – 5:00pm **TRANSPORTATION SERVICE PROVIDERS RECEPTION**

Location: Conference Rooms A through I

Welcome and introduction to local government transportation service providers complete with hors d'oeuvres and refreshments.

Sponsored by: Ayres Associates and Sherwin Industries

5:00 – 6:00pm **WTA TRANSPORTATION SERVICE PROVIDERS AUCTION**

Location: Grand Ballroom

Have a ball and support the WTA Scholarship Fund through your engagement in this live auction. Participation can of course be through bidding, but we also encourage local governments to donate items for the auction.

Dave Bell Auctions, LLC, and Cedar Corporation

ADJOURN - DINNER ON YOUR OWN

6:00 – 10:00pm **NETWORKING ROUNDTABLE**

Location: Follow Signs

This is a can't miss evening of networking opportunities with fellow local officials, road workers, and private sector transportation service providers. Join us in one of four hospitality rooms sponsored by **Cedar, Sherwin Industries, Contech and Scott Construction** complete with free heavy hors d'oeuvres and refreshments.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 29, 2026

6:30 – 7:45am **BREAKFAST - COMPLIMENTARY BUFFET**

Location: Conference Rooms A through I

Freshly cut fruit, muffins and breakfast breads, orange & apple juices, freshly brewed regular and decaffeinated coffee and hot teas. Eggs, smoked bacon, sausage patties and breakfast potatoes.

Sponsored by: Paladin Project Management Group, LLC

7:45 – 8:30am **OPTION A PAVEMENT PRESERVATION (PDH's 0.75)**

Location: Grand Ballroom

Extending the life cycle of your town road with preservation and penetrating emulsions.

Dan Swietz, Bitumix Solutions

7:45 – 8:30am **OPTION B BRUSH CONTROL: WHY YOU SHOULD BE CONCERNED AND WHAT YOU CAN DO (PDH's 0.75)**

Location: Upper Grand Ballroom

Brush control costs a lot of time, energy, and money. Learn about effective methods for general brush control, including spray and mechanical.

Lee Shambeau, 4 Control and Rick Schulte, Nutrien

8:30 – 9:00am **NETWORKING INTERSECTION**

Location: Conference Rooms A through I

Take a break and visit the Town Transportation Service Providers in the Vendor Exhibit Area.

Sponsored by:

9:00 – 9:15am **FAST RIDE WITH USDA RURAL DEVELOPMENT (PDH's 0.25)**

Location: Grand Ballroom

A glimpse into USDA Rural Development programs and a gateway for you to learn more.

Andrew Iverson, US Department of Agriculture State Director for WI.

9:15 - 9:45am **ASPHALT: UNVEILING THE TERMINOLOGY OF HOT MIX ASPHALT (PDH's 0.5)**

Location: Grand Ballroom

This presentation offers an exploration into the world of Hot Mix Asphalt (HMA), focusing on its fundamental components and industry-specific terminology. Attendees will gain a clear understanding of the essential elements making up HMA, including aggregates, asphalt cement, and air voids, as well as familiarize themselves with key terms such as mixture types, gradations, and binder grades. Whether you are new to the field or looking to refresh your knowledge, this session provides foundational knowledge needed to navigate the intricacies of asphalt paving.

Deb Schwerman, Executive Director WI Asphalt Pavement Association

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 29, 2026 (continued)

9:45 – 10:15am **Pavement Preservation-The Innovation of Crackfilling (PDH's 0.5)**

Location: Grand Ballroom

The time, how and when to crackfill using the latest technology.

Jim Lippert, Sherwin Industries

10:15 – 10:45am **WISLR-ANNUAL CERTIFICATION AND PAVEMENT RATINGS (PDH's 0.5)**

Location: Grand Ballroom

The inside information how each Town should file their annual certification and ratings.

Theresa MacFarlane, WisDOT

Statewide Local Roads Coordinator

10:45 - 11:00am **BREAK** (Please remember to check out of your hotel room.)

11:00am – 1:00pm **WISDOT CERTIFIED FLAGGER TRAINING AND WORK ZONE SAFETY TRAINING 101 (PDH'S 2.0)**

Location: Grand Ballroom

Obtain your two-year required flagger certification and take the first step into work zone safety 101. This 101 introduction is a pre-requisite for a separate 201 workshop that will be held in several locations throughout the state at a later date.

Gary Kennedy, DOT Certified Flagging Instructor

DJ Fedderly P.E.;P.L.S. Paladin Program Management Group LLC

1:00pm **ADJOURN - LUNCH ON YOUR OWN**

Be sure to visit one of the four hospitality rooms sponsored by:



LIVE AUCTION
Tuesday, April 28
5:00pm



Upper Grand Ballroom - Chula Vista Resort

Join us for refreshments and a Live Auction to support the WTA Scholarship Program!

The Wisconsin Towns Association (WTA) will be holding a fundraiser at Town Road School to support the scholarship program and would like to collect auction items from businesses across each section of the state.

100% of the money raised will go towards the scholarships.

We are asking Towns and businesses to donate an item of approximately \$50 value and we will recognize each business during the time their item is being auctioned. NOTE: Local items raise the most money! Try to think of personalized items from your region.

Sponsored By:



Thanks again for your support!
Any questions or concerns regarding the auction or our scholarship program, please contact Gary L. Kennedy, WTA Representative
1355 N 16th Street
Manitowoc, WI 54220
920-323-6500 or hwygaryk@gmail.com

Ag Drainage 2026

Solar & conventional lift station considerations, regulatory update and drainage water quality

Monday, March 9, 2026, 9 am–4 pm, *Marshfield, WI*

UW-Stevens Point - *Marshfield* Campus, 2005 W 5th St, Marshfield



Agenda highlights

- **Solar Lift Stations: Considerations for siting and locations**
- **Lift stations and tile outlets: Legal considerations**
- **Designing and maintaining drainage systems for peak efficiency**
- **Understanding regulations that may impact your decisions**
- **How to find old tile in your fields**
- **Water quality and conservation considerations**

Register online today: <https://go.wisc.edu/drainage26>

This event is sponsored by:



**Conservation Professional
Training Program**

The University of Wisconsin–Madison Division of Extension provides equal opportunities in employment and programming in compliance with state and federal law. You may request an interpreter, materials in an alternative language or format, or other services to make this event more accessible, by contacting Kevin Erb at kevin.erb@wisc.edu by February 18, 2026. There's no added cost to you for these services.

Ag Drainage 2026

Solar & conventional lift station considerations, regulatory update & drainage water quality

Monday, March 9, 2026. 9 am – 4 pm

Stevens Point - Marshfield Campus – 2005 W 5th St, Marshfield

Register online: <http://go.wisc.edu/drainage26>

Agenda

- 9 am **Drainage, Conservation and Water Quality Connections**
Steven Hall and Mallika Nocco, UW Madison
- 9:15 **Drainage Law: What You Need to Know Before You Install (tile and lift stations)**
Attorney Kelly T. Wilfert, J.D., UW Madison Farm Law Specialist
- 9:55 **Drainage 101: Does drainage pay? Basic design, spacing and depth, surveying basics.**
Mallika Nocco, UW Madison BioSystems Engineering
- 10:35 Break
- 10:50 **Solar Lift Stations: Considerations for siting and locations**
Lindsay Pease, University of Minnesota-Extension
- 11:50 **Working Lunch: Lift Station experiences: Panel discussion**
Drainage contractors
- 12:50 **Working with Drainage Districts/lift station considerations**
Bart Chapman, DATCP
- 1:10 **Regulations and USDA policy updates**
Brenton Fetting, USDA-NRCS, Tom Nedland, Wisconsin DNR
- 2:00 **Water Quality and Conservation Drainage**
Steven Hall, UW Madison Plant & Agroecosystem Sciences
- 2:30 Break
- 2:40 **On farm drainage research results from Discovery Farms**
Ellen Albright, UW Madison-Extension Discovery Farms
- 3:10 **Finding old tile**
Kevin Erb, UW Madison-Extension Conservation Professional Training Program
- 3:40 **Importance of soil support around pipe**
Trey Allis, P.E., Prinsco
- 4 pm Open Q&A, Wrap up

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Ad Hoc Committees

Town and village boards often rely on the recommendations of local committees when making decisions. Committees are created in a variety of ways and each has a different role to play. This article will explain what committees are, how they operate, and how they can be used to help your community.

Commissions v. Committees

It is important to distinguish commissions from committees. Commissions are statutory bodies that, when formed, must operate under the guidelines of a particular state statute. Those statutes generally dictate the number of commissioners, eligibility to serve on the commission, duties and scope of the commission, and other structural or procedural requirements. Statutory guidelines must be followed when forming, operating, and dissolving a commission.

Commissions are more formal and often more cumbersome than committees. They are more difficult to start up and shut down, and are intended to be long-term bodies. Commissioners generally have or develop a specialized skill set that enables them to provide long-term guidance on specific topics or tasks. Due to their clearly defined statutory duties, commissions usually do not require micromanagement by a town or village board. Finally, the statutes authorizing commissions often provide for some greater legal authority than could be exercised by the town or village board alone.

Committees, on the other hand, are ad hoc bodies that do not operate under any specific statute. Rather, committees are created at the direction of a town or village board. When forming a committee, the town or village board has the discretion to determine things that the statutes might otherwise mandate with a commission such as committee membership, organization, duties, and scope of authority.

Committees are much more flexible than commissions, and may be quickly established, altered, or dissolved at any properly noticed town or village board meeting. This makes committees decidedly short-term enterprises best for addressing limited duration tasks. Committees are also limited by the authority delegated to them in the first place. All told, committees generally require greater supervision from the town or village board.

Committee Authority

The most important thing to remember about an ad hoc committee is that how it is created greatly impacts its duties and authority. Committees can be quite powerful depending on how much authority a board chooses to delegate to it. For example, town boards have the authority to hire town employees under s.

60.37, Wis. Stat. Before making a final decision, however, a board might choose to appoint a hiring committee to evaluate candidates and make recommendations. Alternatively, a board could delegate the ability to actually hire a candidate to that committee, entrusting the committee with significantly more authority. It is important that a town or village board be explicit about what each committee can and cannot do, and to make changes when necessary.

Sometimes a chief executive of a body, such as a town chair or village president, appoints a committee on his/her own. Such a committee is limited to being advisory-only. It is not possible for a chair-appointed committee to be delegated any of the governing body's legal authority because it was not the governing body that created the committee and assigned its duties. A board's authority can only be delegated by action of the board itself – not its chief executive officer.

Similarly, it is important to keep in mind that a town or village board cannot delegate authority to a committee that it does not have in the first place. Towns and villages do not have the authority to adopt local minimum wage, for example, so no town or village board could delegate that authority to a committee. This would be creating legal authority out of thin air and would not be recognized by any court.

Committee Compensation

A town or village board may decide to pay committee members for their service, and often do so with a per diem for each meeting attended. Paid committee members are employees of the town for payroll and tax purposes. Any board member who also serves on a committee may get paid a per diem for committee meetings, but that per diem rate must be the same as the rate that non-board members receive. See Wis. Stat. § 66.0501(2). Further, there is no double-dipping. You cannot receive both a board per diem and a committee per diem for the same meeting. You may only get paid the rate approved for the body that is actually having a meeting.

Open Meetings and Public Records

The Wisconsin open meetings law applies to all governmental bodies, including ad hoc committees. See Wis. Stat. § 19.82(1). Therefore, all committee meetings must be publicly noticed at least 24 hours in advance pursuant to the open meetings law. The Wisconsin public records law similarly applies to committees, and committee members must preserve their records and comply with public record requests. See Wis. Stat. § 19.32(1).

Committee Dissolution

When a committee is no longer needed, it may be dissolved using the same procedures that formed it. Essentially, whatever body created the committee may alter or disband the committee at any time unless different procedures have been established.

Clerk's Corner



By: Melissa Kono, UW Ext./WTA Clerk Specialist

Spring Election Preparations

It's almost Election Day once again in Wisconsin, and the absence of a statewide primary in February means many of us have not had an election since April 2025. Since then, new guidance was issued on observers in the polling place, election inspectors were appointed to a new term, and there are preparations to consider as we head into a busy election year.

Updated Election Observer Guidance

Updated guidance on observers in the polling place in Wis. Admin. Code Chapter 4 on Election Observers took effect on August 1, 2025. See: https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/code/admin_code/el/4. Updates were made to the EL-109 Election Observers Log, the EL-109R Election Observers: Rules-at-a-Glance brochure, and the EL-110 Order to Leave. Prior versions of these documents are outdated and should be discarded. Updated versions of the documents to have at the polling place may be found at: <https://elections.wi.gov/memo/election-observer-forms-training>. A designated observer area should be no closer than three feet and no further than eight feet from the public aspects of voting: voters stating their name and address, voter registration, and remaking ballots. See EL 4.03 (b). It is acceptable to have multiple observer areas throughout the polling places, and observers are allowed to move to throughout the polling place to designated observer areas. The updated guidance also includes restrictions for observers that prohibited observers from handling or taking photos or copies of original documents, so while observers may review the poll list (excluding confidential portions), they are not to handle original documents. See EL 4.03 (9).

Accessibility in the polling place

Per Wis. Stat. §5.25 (4)(a) each polling place shall be accessible to all individuals with disabilities. The April election provides an opportunity for the clerk, chief inspector(s), and election inspectors to take note of the accessibility of the polling place and suggest modifications and improvements to make voting accessible for all. The Wisconsin Elections Commission (WEC) publishes the Polling Place Accessibility Toolkit that provides a guide to ensuring accessibility in the polling place which includes a Polling Place Set-Up Guide, Quick Fix Guide, and Election Day Accessibility Checklist and may be accessed at: <https://elections.wi.gov/resources/quick-reference-topics/polling-place-accessibility-toolkit>.

In addition, WEC provides signage and equipment to help improve accessibility in the polling place. Accessible parking and entrance signage, ring bells, threshold ramps, and signature guides are available to order, free of charge, to ensure all aspects of the voting process are accessible to all voters. The Accessibility Supplies order form EL-502 can be found at: <https://elections.wi.gov/wec-form/accessibility-supplies-order-form>. WEC conducts accessibility audits on Election Day throughout Wisconsin pursuant to Wis. Stat. §5.25 (4)(a). During an accessibility audit, the auditor will first check in with the Chief Inspector, be wearing badge that identifies them as a representative of WEC and will provide a letter to the Chief Inspector to keep on file. The auditor will review the parking area, the

pathway from the parking area to the accessible entrance, the accessible entrance, any interior routes to the voting area, and the voting area itself, including the voting equipment. The auditor is checking that these areas are accessible for all voters, and that voters using a mobility device such as a wheelchair, are easily able to navigate both the parking lot and the voting area. These audits are not punitive, and a report will be provided to the clerk identifying any issues to remedy.

Contingency and Emergency Plans

Prior to Election Day, review contingency and emergency plans for the polling place with election workers, ensuring that all election workers know what to do in all types of emergencies such as severe/inclement weather, fire, flooding, power outages, and threats. In addition to an accessibility review, I encourage clerks and election workers to review the emergency plans while at the polling place and to have conversations about any updates that should be made to the plan. Listing contact numbers for the County Clerk, law enforcement, the voting equipment vendor, etc. will ensure that everyone who is working on Election Day knows how to contact key partners should an issue or emergency arise.

Preparing Election Inspectors

Election workers appointed by the governing body in December to serve a two-year term beginning January 1, 2026 through December 31, 2027 will need to take the Oath of Office and receive training before working at an election. Clerks are to notify those who have been appointed as election inspectors within 5 days and appointees must file an oath of office within 10 days of notification of appointment. See Wis. Stat. § 7.30(5). The EL-154 Oath of Office is found at the end of the Election Day and Election Administration Manuals or at <https://www.wisctowns.com/documents/official-oath-el-154.pdf>. Clerks should keep these oaths on file. Any new election inspectors should be reported to WI Unemployment Insurance and the State Directory of New Hires within 20 days of hire: <https://dwd.wisconsin.gov/uinh/>. Please note that election workers need only be reported to the New Hire system once.

Counting Write-Ins

Counting Write-Ins votes at the April Election can be particularly confusing due to couple factors, such as offices with “Vote for Two” candidates, and offices with no ballot candidates, which is not uncommon with local races such as school board, county board, and municipal offices. If there is at least one ballot candidate for a “Vote for One” candidate office, then only registered write-in candidates are counted. Candidates have until noon on the Friday immediately preceding an election to submit their paperwork to be considered a registered write-in. See Wis. Stat. § 7.50(2)(em). The filing officer (such as the County Clerk) will notify municipal clerks if there are any registered write-ins, and clerks should provide these names to the election inspectors. However, the election inspectors should not announce to each voter if there are registered write-in candidates for an office and should provide that information only if requested by the voter. If there are no ballot candidates for an office, a common occurrence at spring elections, count all write-in votes, regardless of whether they are registered candidates. Similarly, if a ballot candidate passes away prior to the election, all write-in votes are counted. As always, consult the Election Day Manual which provides several walk-through examples of write-in situations if there are any question regarding counting votes for write-in candidates.



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REACHING OUT



By Jake Langenhahn
Outreach Specialist

2026 WTA Educational Events

The WTA’s mission statement contains three components necessary for unlocking the potential of democracy. One of those components is education. Education creates knowledge, and knowledge leads to sound decision-making which is necessary to realize the true potential of government by the people. We wanted to highlight the educational events that you can look forward to for the remainder of 2026.

District Meetings

At the time of this article’s writing, there are eight remaining in person District Meetings. We also offer a two-day virtual option as an alternative for those who can’t meet in person. This year’s District Meetings feature Board of Review (BOR) certification training (which one member of your town/village BOR must complete annually), a session on how to fill town board vacancies, an in-depth discussion on EMS provision, and an overview of long-term transportation funding. For a complete agenda and a list of dates and locations, please refer to the registration information in this magazine.



2026 Marshfield District Meeting

A.I. Workshops

The WTA along with the Wisconsin Counties Association and League of Wisconsin Municipalities are sponsoring a series of four workshops that will focus on artificial intelligence (A.I.). They are single day training sessions organized by the University of Wisconsin Extension that will be held in March throughout the state. The intent behind these workshops is to help local governments understand what generative A.I. is, understand how to use A.I. responsibly, discover common pitfalls to avoid, and gain hands-on experience. For more information, please visit this website: <https://extension.wisc.edu/aiforums/>.

Town Road School

The third annual Town Road School will take place April 27 to April 29. This popular event teaches town officers and employees about road management tools and techniques, highlights product solutions from vendors, and allows attendees to network with their fellow town policymakers and road workers. This year’s road school will be at the Chula Vista in Wisconsin Dells. For more information (including a complete agenda), please refer to the registration information in this magazine.

ACE Twilight Meetings

WTA partners with the Professional Dairy Producers of Wisconsin and Wisconsin Counties Association to host a series of farm tours each August. The ACE Twilight Meetings bring together agricultural producers and community leaders to have a dialogue about important agricultural issues at the local level. These free tours are held in several locations. The WTA will announce tour dates and locations sometime in late Spring/early Summer.

Fall Workshops

The WTA partners with UW Extension's Local Government Education program to host a series of financially focused workshops throughout the state annually in the Fall. There is also a virtual option for those who cannot attend in person. While we cannot announce the dates and locations just yet, you can expect a Save the Date advertisement in the WTA magazine sometime this summer.

Annual Convention

The WTA Annual Convention will be held at the Holiday Inn and Convention Center in Stevens Point from October 4 to October 6. The annual convention is a gathering of town officers from throughout the state. Attendees will be able to network amongst themselves and with vendors, attend educational presentations provided by WTA staff and other speakers, and much more! Lodging information can be found in this magazine. The WTA will announce when the agenda is finalized, and when registration has opened.

County Unit Meetings

Please remember to attend your county unit meetings! WTA members in each county periodically join together to learn and network about local issues. This is referred to as a county unit meeting. Meetings typically include presentations from local leaders and WTA representatives. State legislators will often provide updates on what is happening in Madison and listen to your concerns. County unit meetings are announced via email and through the USPS.

Town Law Conference

Towns boards must act in accordance with statutes, administrative code, and court precedent. The WTA hosts an annual virtual Town Law Conference in the Fall so town officials and the attorneys advising them can learn about the laws and court decisions applicable to town government. Presenters are typically municipal attorneys who work with towns. The 2026 Town Law Conference will be held in October.

In addition to the events previously listed, the WTA has various clerk trainings that are organized by Melissa Kono, the WTA Clerk Specialist. The WTA may also offer other trainings such as webinars on various contemporary topics throughout the year. The best way to be aware of WTA educational events is to monitor the WTA magazine and your email. If you have questions about any of the events that were mentioned in this article, please feel free to message the WTA Outreach Specialist Jake Langenhahn by emailing jake.langenhahn@wisctowns.com.

2026 DISTRICT MEETINGS Dates & Locations

Please see our website for a link to Google maps for each location.

Friday, February 27, 2026 – Holiday Inn Hotel & Convention Center, 1001 Amber Ave., Stevens Point, WI 54481

Saturday, February 28, 2026 – Farm Discovery Center, 7001 Gass Lake Rd., Manitowoc, WI 54220

Friday, March 6, 2026 – Stony Creek Hotel & Conference Center, 3060 S. Kinney Coulee Rd., Onalaska WI 54650

Saturday, March 7, 2026 – The Florian Gardens Conference Center, 2340 Lorch Ave., Eau Claire, WI 54701

Friday, March 13, 2026 – 841 Brewhouse, 841 W. Milwaukee St., Whitewater, WI 53190

Saturday, March 14, 2026 – Old Hickory Golf Club, W7596 State Road 33, Beaver Dam, WI 53916

Friday, March 27, 2026 – Turtle Back Golf Course, 1985 18 ½ St., Rice Lake, WI 54868

Saturday, March 28, 2026 – Lakewoods Resort & Lodge, 21540 CTH M, Cable, WI 54821

Monday, March 30, 2026 – Virtual Session – agenda available at www.wisctowns.com.

Tuesday, March 31, 2026 – Virtual Session: agenda available at www.wisctowns.com.

Inclement Weather: If a meeting is going to be cancelled due to inclement weather, there will be a Message on the WTA voicemail between 6am and 7am the day of the meeting. 715-526-3157

Thank you to our 2026 District Meeting Sponsors!



2026 DISTRICT MEETING REGISTRATION FORM

\$65 – Early registration

(payment must be received at least 10 days in advance of the workshop date)

\$80 – Late and walk-in registration

In-person registrants will receive a packet of printed materials, access to virtual programming, and access to recorded videos of each presentation. Virtual registrants will receive an email with electronic materials. All attendees will receive an email with information about how to participate in the virtual events via telephone/computer and how to access the recordings. **AN EMAIL IS REQUIRED FOR REGISTRATION.** If you plan to attend the virtual events via telephone, the phone number from which you will be calling is also required.

Name	Office	
Town	County	
Address		
City	State	Zip
Telephone (REQUIRED for teleconference access)		
Email (REQUIRED)		

I plan to attend the following workshop (please check one):

- Friday, February 27, 2026: Stevens Point – Holiday Inn Hotel & Conference Center
- Saturday, February 28, 2026: Manitowoc – Farm Discovery Center
- Friday, March 6, 2026: Onalaska – Stony Creek Hotel & Conference Center
- Saturday, March 7, 2026: Eau Claire – The Florian Gardens Conference Center
- Friday, March 13, 2026: Whitewater – 841 Brewhouse
- Saturday, March 14, 2026: Beaver Dam – Old Hickory Golf Club
- Friday, March 27, 2026: Rice Lake – Turtle Back Golf Course
- Saturday, March 28, 2026: Cable – Lakewoods Resort & Lodge
- Monday, March 30, 2026 & Tuesday, March 31, 2026 - **VIRTUAL PROGRAMMING ONLY**

This form should be copied for multiple registrations. Make check payable to the Wisconsin Towns Association and mail along with registration forms to: Wisconsin Towns Association; W7686 County Road MMM; Shawano, WI 54166.

Registration and payment may also be submitted online on the WTA website, www.wisctowns.com. Total charges will include a \$2.65 credit card processing convenience fee for payments made via credit card. If you have any questions, please email wtowns@wisctowns.com or call (715) 526-3157.

Cancellations received 10 days or more in advance of the workshop date will receive a full refund less a \$15.00 administrative fee. Cancellations received less than 10 days in advance will be charged a \$15.00 administrative fee plus the cost of food. Refund requests submitted 30 or more days after the event will not be processed.



WTA 2026 DISTRICT MEETING IN PERSON & VIRTUAL

IN PERSON

8:15am-8:45am

Registration

Morning refreshments sponsored by Scott Construction, Inc.



8:45am-9:00am

Call to Order, Introductions and Announcements

9:00am-11:15am

Board of Review (BOR) Certification Training

State law requires that at least one BOR member be certified annually. The WTA recommends that all BOR members attend this training.

11:15am-11:45am

Town Office Vacancies and Appointments

Does your town have an upcoming retirement? Maybe a current town board supervisor is going to be moving out of the town? Wondering what you're supposed to do? This session will review town official vacancies and what your town can do to fill a vacancy. This presentation, provided by WTA staff, will also review several important changes created by the recently passed Town Law Fix bill.

11:45am-12:45pm

Lunch

Lunch sponsored by Thunder Road.



12:45pm-1:45pm

Saving EMS: One Size Does Not Fit All

This past decade has proven that Emergency Medical Services (EMS) have been in a state of crisis, and Wisconsin EMS has not been immune to these challenges. Something must be done to save EMS in our local communities, but what? Using successful real-life case scenarios from across Wisconsin, presenter Dana Sechler will highlight solutions that municipalities have implemented to create a viable ambulance service that can provide sustainable EMS within their communities. Dana has been involved in the fire service and EMS communities in various capacities for over 34 years and is one of the co-founding Principals of Strategic Management and Consulting, LLC.

1:45pm-2:00pm

Break

Afternoon refreshments sponsored by Rural Mutual Insurance.



2:00pm-3:00pm

Transportation Funding: Today and Tomorrow?

Over the course of the last decade there have been significant increases in state funded transportation investments. The Local Road Improvement Program witnessed the creation of the Supplemental and Agricultural components. General Transportation Aids increased as well. The enhancements were funded in large part through general purpose revenues and to a lesser degree through dedicated transportation revenues. This was possible due to a strong economy and significant and multiple state budget surpluses. When the economy cools, surpluses cease, or inflation runs rampant again, how will local road funding keep up in the absence of large amounts of general purpose revenue? Learn from Debby Jackson, Transportation Development Association Executive Director, and WTA staff about how you can play a role in ensuring transportation funding isn't decreased, addresses needs, and keeps up with inflation.

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