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## League 2025-2027 Legislature's Biennial Budget Summary Key Municipal Provisions

### Local Government Finance

- ★ **Shared Revenue** - Building on last session's commitment in Act 12, the budget trues up the 2.3% sales tax increase local governments will see reflected in their shared revenue and supplemental shared revenue payments this year (FY 2025-2026), locks in a 3.4% increase in payments next year (FY 2026-2027), and estimates a 2.9% increase for the following year (FY 2027-2028). Initial estimates for FY 2026-2027 were higher, but the elimination of the sales tax on electric and gas utility bills will cause a reduction in collections, leading to the 3.4% increase being 0.7% lower than the 4.1% increase initially estimated earlier in the budget process.
- ★ **Municipal Services Payments** - \$14.0 million SEG was provided over the biennium to increase the payments cities and villages receive for the municipal services rendered to state-owned facilities. The current program covers an estimated 37.6% of local costs, requiring residents to make up the difference. This increase of \$7.0 million per year is the first increase in Municipal Services Payments in 22 years and will bring reimbursement to an estimated 50.0%.
- ★ **Water and Wastewater Utility Financing** - The Clean Water Fund Program for wastewater utilities and Safe Drinking Water Loan Program for water utilities, collectively known as the Environmental Improvement Fund, finances capital projects necessary for clean water around the state. After falling short of needs in the last biennium, a huge investment was critical to meet capitalization needs to draw down federal funds and ensure Wisconsin projects receive a loan. After just \$46.0 million was approved in the last budget, \$732,250,100 in new revenue-obligation bonding authority was approved in this budget, ensuring projects aren't delayed and saving ratepayers money due to loans being issued at below-market interest rates.
- ★ **Protect the Penny** - The League was able to stop the Local Government Fund from paying down the school district levy as a result of districts charging in their levy the Personal Property Tax (PPT) amounts while also collecting state PPT backfilling aid in FY 2024-2025. The Legislative Fiscal Bureau analysts, which assist the legislature in crafting the budget, pitched an option where the Local Government Fund would pay \$57.5 million for school districts and \$5.1 million for technical colleges, a total of \$62.6 million per year, to backfill the amounts they levied for PPT. A League memo cautioning against this option helped to protect the penny.
- **Grant Writing and Compliance Assistance** - \$3.0 million SEG was provided in FY 2025-26 and will be available through 2029 to provide grants that assist local governments under 7,500 in population with applying for and complying with grant programs for eligible services. This funding will be held by the Joint Finance Committee and released pending passage of legislation.
- **Innovation Grant Modifications** - As municipalities are gearing up to apply for an Innovation Grant, important modifications to program requirements were made in the budget, including:

- Deleting the 10% cost savings provision and certification of the actual savings amounts,
- Deleting penalties for not meeting the cost savings requirement,
- Making the payments 25% of the total costs regardless of whether the services transferred to another unit of local government or a private or nonprofit entity,
- Reducing the number of years that a transfer must stay in effect from six to three,
- Extending by two years the duration of the Innovation Grant Program, and
- Requiring grant recipients to keep the cost of providing the consolidated services or duties within 115% of the cost in the year prior to the agreement.

## Transportation

- ★ **General Transportation Aids** - On average, cities and villages only have about 14% to 16% of their roadwork construction and maintenance costs covered by state General Transportation Aids (GTAs). Simply, GTAs have failed to keep pace with inflation over the last two and a half decades, resulting in more projects being delayed and more projects being bonded. The 3.0% increase in each year of the biennium for this budget doesn't cause us to close the gap and catch up, but it does help to ensure we don't fall further behind and represents a higher increase than we've seen in previous budgets, including the last budget where 2.0% per year was provided. The investment for this budget's increase totals \$33.2 million SEG over the biennium.
- ★ **Local Roads Improvement Program** - While GTAs are meant to fund the day-to-day needs of municipalities, the Local Roads Improvement Program (LRIP) - Discretionary Supplement is meant to assist with those major reconstruction projects to lower annual maintenance costs in the near term for a municipal project that may otherwise be delayed. Now funded four budgets in a row, LRIP will provide \$100.0 million SEG to local transportation projects over the next two years, creating a smoother ride ahead for many Wisconsinites.
- ★ **Transit Funding** - Transit exists throughout the state, many of which are Tier C transit systems which serve populations between 2,500 and 50,000 through a few small bus services but mostly with shared ride taxi services. The \$1,875,000 GPR provided over the biennium to Tier C amounts to a nearly 30% increase in the second year of the biennium in state funding and builds into base funding for the next budget, minimizing the impact of a handful of Tier B systems that will move into Tier C. As a result of that recategorization, it's expected that Tier B will also see an increase. Finally, the state's investment in paratransit aids was also increased by \$343,800 SEG in FY 2025-2026, providing a 10% increase in those aids over base funding.
- **State Highway Rehabilitation** - \$322.5 million SEG was provided over the biennium for the State Highway Rehabilitation Program. This program manages state trunk highways and bridges including resurfacing, reconditioning, and reconstruction, as well as other minor projects, on state trunk highways. With many state highways running through municipalities, this increase should help to bring those highways serving as main streets and key arteries into better shape.
- **Harbor Assistance Program** - \$15.0 million SEG was provided in FY 2025-26 for the statewide Harbor Assistance Grant Program. In past budgets, similar amounts were provided, but funding was earmarked out of the general pot for specific projects. In this budget, the amounts earmarked for those specific projects was addressed as separate budgetary items, allowing this full amount to be available for competitive applications from qualifying municipalities around the state.

- **Local Bridge and Culvert Improvements** - \$30.0 million was provided over the biennium for grants to improve small bridges and culverts identified as being in poor or worse conditions under the Local Bridge and Culvert Assessment Program conducted in the previous biennium.
- **Agricultural Roads Improvement Program** - \$120.0 million was provided over the biennium for transportation infrastructure projects which may help to facilitate agricultural traffic. A statutory change is set to be introduced that will allow any road used by producers or processors that needs work to qualify, not just those with marked weight restrictions as specified last session.
- **New Transportation Fund Revenues** - With revenues for the segregated Transportation Fund declining relative to need, the budget provides \$580.0 million in one-time GPR transfers in FY 2025-2026 and increases fees to generate nearly \$200 million in new revenues, including:
  - \$116.3 million by raising the vehicle title fee by \$50 from \$157 to \$207,
  - \$26.3 million by raising the registration fee for vehicles over \$6,000 pounds by 10%,
  - \$21.4 million by raising license plate fees by \$6 for new plates and \$2 for replacement,
  - \$16.7 million by creating special blackout and retro plates with a \$25 special charge,
  - \$7.5 million by raising driver's license fees by \$8.50 from \$24 to \$32.50, and
  - Approximately \$10 million in revenues generated from other miscellaneous increases.

## Economic Development

- ★ **Film Protection Office and Tax Credit** - \$160,200 GPR was provided over the biennium to the Department of Tourism to hire a director of the newly created State Film Office. The State Film Office would administer up to \$5.0 million in tax credits each year for film production, which includes 30% of eligible production expenditures and salary or wages spent to film in Wisconsin or 30% of investments in a film production company in Wisconsin. This office and the tax credits will assist in marketing Wisconsin as a destination by getting us on the big screen or on your TV screen. Viewers will then be able to see all Wisconsin has to offer.
- ★ **Childcare Funding** - The workforce challenge isn't just a result of a dwindling pool of eligible workers, it's also due to otherwise eligible Wisconsinites leaving the workforce, leaving your area, or leaving the state due to rising costs. Childcare is one of those big costs for young families. With over \$175 million in new funding invested in various childcare programs paired with regulatory changes, providers will have assistance to ensure that slots are available and affordable for young Wisconsin families. The childcare initiatives in the budget include:
  - \$110.0 million in interest from federal funds in FY 2025-26 for the Department of Children and Families (DCF) to provide bridge payments to providers that were receiving payments from the now expiring Child Care Counts Program,
  - \$65.0 million GPR in FY 2026-27 for payments to create a childcare-based 4k program in areas without a school-based option for a four-year old kindergarten program, and
  - Allowing childcare providers to hire 16-year-olds who meet certain qualifications for assistant childcare teachers, whereas previously it was a 17-year-old minimum.
- **Talent Recruitment Grants** - \$5.0 million GPR was provided in FY 2025-26 to create a Talent Recruitment Grant Program at the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC). This program will provide grants of up to \$500,000 per year to eligible applicants, which includes municipalities, that prepare a plan to attract out-of-state working aged households to relocate to their municipality through targeted marketing and incentive payments. With the dwindling

population of eligible workers both for municipalities and private employers, this initiative is part of the all-the-above approach we need to take to ensure we're not shrinking in population.

- **Local Project Grant Program** - \$50.0 million in interest from federal funds was provided in FY 2025-26 for the Local Project Grant Program. This program, which was established in the last budget, is available to fund non-state capital projects that serve the statewide public interest. Municipalities are eligible applicants, and all recipients must provide a match of 50% or greater.
- **Arts Boards Funding** - \$113,700 GPR was provided over the biennium to the Arts Board which provides aids to arts organizations, promoting cultural and economic development opportunities.
- **WEDC Funding** - As a result of a reduction in revenues from economic development surcharges, the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) will see their block funding reduced by \$3,840,000 SEG over the biennium. This will lower their base funding in FY 2024-25 of \$44,870,000 to \$42,600,000 in FY 2025-26 and \$43,300,000 in FY 2026-27.

## Public Safety

- ★ **EMT Training and Licensure** - Recognizing the need for more emergency medical technicians (EMTs) throughout the state, the budget sets aside \$10.5 million to fund programs created by a bill that's worked its way through bipartisan committee votes. Specifically, the Wisconsin Technical College System would receive \$7.0 million GPR in FY 2026-27 in grants for the provision of emergency medical services courses, and employers that pay for their new EMTs initial training expenses could be reimbursed for those costs out of a pot of \$3.5 million GPR in FY 2026-27. The funding is held by the legislature until passage of the legislation.
- **State Disaster Assistance** - \$6.0 million SEG was provided over the biennium, an increase from just over \$1.4 million SEG in the last biennium, for making payments to local units of government and federally recognized American Indian tribes or bands in the state for damages and costs incurred as the result of a disaster if federal disaster assistance is not available.
- **Urban Search and Rescue Task Force (Wisconsin Task Force 1)** - \$4.5 million SEG was provided over the biennium for costs related to and payments for response teams in the urban search and rescue task force, also known as Wisconsin Task Force 1. In the last biennium, just over \$1 million was provided, making this a substantial increase. To date, 20 jurisdictions have signed contracts with the task force, including Antigo, Appleton, Beaver Dam, Beloit, Fond du Lac, Grant Chute, Green Bay, Janesville, La Crosse, Marinette, Menominee, Merrill, Mount Pleasant, Neenah-Menasha, Oshkosh, Racine, Sheboygan, Superior, Waukesha, and Wausau.
- **HAZMAT Response** - \$3.0 million SEG was provided over the biennium for regional hazardous materials response teams part of the Wisconsin Hazardous Material Response System (WHMRS). The WHMRS assists communities overwhelmed by the effects of a hazardous material emergency by providing specialized resources to aid in stabilization and mitigation activities.
- **Live 911 Pilot** - \$100,000 SEG was provided in FY 2025-26 to fund a Live 911 Pilot Program, which is held in the supplemental account pending passage of legislation. Under the legislation, pilot areas would be selected to test a live 911 program which would allow those calling 911 to connect through audiovisual means, like FaceTime, to the dispatcher, better allowing the dispatcher to see what level of response is needed and direct emergency services accordingly.

- ***Youth Volunteer Firefighter Training*** - \$150,000 PR was provided over the biennium in one-time funding to continue the Department of Safety and Professional Services' Youth Volunteer Firefighter Training Program which provides grants to train high schoolers in firefighting.
- ***Public Protective Services Hearing Protection Program*** - \$2.6 million GPR was provided in FY 2025-26 for the public protective services hearing protection program, which requires the state to provide hearing protection devices to law enforcement and fire protection agencies at no cost.
- ***WISCOM Equipment Grants*** - \$10.0 million GPR was provided in FY 2025-26 for a grant program for public safety interoperable communication systems to upgrade to WISCOM 800. This funding is available on top of the original \$2.0 million available from the last budget as a result of 2023 Wisconsin Act 221, which specifies that the grant program will end on March 29, 2028. Grants require a 20% match from local units of government. In addition, 70% of the grants must be provided to daily users of WISCOM, and the remaining 30% must be provided to non-daily users. According to the Wisconsin Department of Military Affairs (DMA), each piece of equipment costs approximately \$10,400. A WISCOM 800 contract was signed with L3Harris in May 2024 allowing compatible equipment to be significantly discounted through May 2027.

## Parks and Water

- ***Pre-Disaster Flood Resilience Grants*** - \$2,000,000 GPR was provided in FY 2025-26 on a one-time basis to continue the successful Pre-Disaster Flood Resilience Grant Program at DMA. Earlier this year, Round 1 was awarded to 11 recipients, including two cities and one village.
- ***Great Lakes Contaminated Sediment Removal*** - \$7.5 million GPR was provided in FY 2025-26 one-time for removing contaminated sediments in Lake Michigan, Lake Superior, and tributaries.
- ***Boating Enforcement Aids*** - \$640,800 SEG was provided over the biennium for Boating Safety and Enforcement Aids. This funding is provided to municipalities and counties with more than 100 acres of water or one mile of river shoreline to assist with the costs of local boating law enforcement, water-based search and rescue operations, and boating safety activities.
- ***Dam Safety Grants*** - \$4.0 million GPR was provided in FY 2025-26 for the Municipal Dam Safety Grant Program which provides matching grants to counties, cities, villages, towns and lake districts for the repair, reconstruction, or removal of publicly owned dams in need of work.
- ***Urban Nonpoint Source and Municipal Flood Control Programs*** - \$4.0 million GPR was provided in FY 2025-26 for the two programs which assist with planning and projects to reduce municipal runoff and address concerns regarding flooding vulnerabilities in cities and villages.

## Municipal Operations

- ***Crisis Urgent Care and Observation Facility Grants*** - \$10.0 million GPR was provided in FY 2025-26 in the supplemental account for release once the Wisconsin Department of Health Services finalizes rules relating to 2023 Act 249. This law allows regional crisis urgent care and observation facilities to receive grants to be established, allowing voluntary or involuntary check-ins and holds without receiving medical clearance for the purposes of a mental health evaluation.
- ***Pension Administration System Funding*** - \$71 million SEG was provided in FY 2025-2026 to fund the Wisconsin Department of Employment Trust Fund's automated operating system for pension administration. This system will allow Wisconsin Retirement System beneficiaries to digitally access their benefits statements and learn more about their pension benefits.



- ***Commercial Driver Training Program*** - \$500,000 GPR over the biennium is provided to the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development to continue the Commercial Driver Training Program. Municipalities struggling to find and train CDL drivers may want to explore those schools and education programs that have worked with [this program previously](#) and coordinate on a grant application to fund some of their educational costs for new CDL employees.

## Key to Abbreviations

- All items listed in the League yellow were advocacy priorities for the 2025-2027 Budget. Those that are starred were top priorities.
- FY 2025-26 means the state fiscal year running from July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2026
- FY 2026-27 means the state fiscal year running from July 1, 2026 to June 30, 2027
- GPR means general purpose revenue, which is the state's primary funding source from taxes
- PR means program revenue where the funds being expended were generated by the agency
- SEG means a segregated account where revenues and expenditures are separate from GPR
- One-time funding means the expenditure is not built into base funding and will either cease after this fiscal biennium ends or will have to be affirmatively and specifically renewed in the next budget. One-time funding is a good use of surplus funding as it doesn't generate future deficits.