2019-2023 Transportation Improvement Program Approved

The Madison Area Transportation Planning Board (MATPB) approved the 2019-2023 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) last fall, which was recently approved by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) for incorporation into the state TIP. The TIP lists major projects with approved or committed funding, which implement the long-range regional transportation plan.

MATPB must approve all projects with federal funding and/or that are regionally significant, including those selected or programmed by other agencies such as WisDOT and Metro Transit. MATPB receives its own allocation of federal funding under two programs: Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) Urban and Transportation Alternatives (TA). MATPB solicits applications and selects projects for funding under these programs every two years.

The major new project MATPB awarded funding under the STBG Urban program is the reconstruction of University Avenue from Shorewood Boulevard to University Bay Drive. Scheduled for 2021, the project will include improvements to the University Bay Drive intersection, bike lanes, and new larger storm sewer facilities to address the issue of frequent street flooding in this area. A grade-separated crossing of University Bay Drive for the Campus Drive path will be included if feasible. Transit improvements will also be included in anticipation of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) being planned in the corridor.

The new bicycle project MATPB awarded funding under the TA program is the Garver path on Madison’s near east side. Scheduled for 2021, the path will extend from the intersection of the Capital City Trail/Sugar Avenue to Milwaukee Street through Sherry (O.B.) Park. It is a small segment of a longer path ultimately planned to extend to Sun Prairie. The Village of Cottage Grove also received statewide TA funding for a path connecting the existing Glacial Drumlin State Trailhead to the extension of the Capital City Trail, which Dane County plans to build in 2020. The village’s project is scheduled for 2021. Part of a designated U.S. bicycle route, the two projects together will complete a nearly exclusive off-street route between Milwaukee and Madison and points west.

Among other notable new projects included in the TIP is the reconstruction of S. Blair Street (U.S. Highway 151) and the Blair/John Nolen/Williamson/Wilson Street intersection to address multimodal safety issues at the intersection. A joint project of WisDOT and the city of Madison, it includes moving the intersection to the west, adding protected left turns on Blair, relocating the Machinery Row driveway to the southwest, and significant bike facility improvements. The most significant transit project is a major renovation of Metro’s bus maintenance facility over the next five years.
Bicycle Level of Traffic Stress Network Report Published

Bicycle Level of Traffic Stress (LTS) is an objective, data-driven approach to evaluating traffic-related stress on bicycle routes based on roadway design, traffic volumes and speeds, intersection characteristics, and other factors. All routes, including streets and off-street paths, are rated from 1 to 4, with a higher score indicating more stressful riding conditions. Routes with LTS scores of 1 or 2 are considered low-stress; these are the places where an average person would be expected to feel comfortable riding a bicycle.

MATPB is putting the bicycle LTS methodology to work in several different ways. The first of these is as an aid to bicyclists in planning trips in the Madison area. The Low-Stress Route Finder (described in the sidebar) provides users with a map detailing LTS on streets and paths in Dane County as well as directions between two points tailored to users’ bicycling comfort level.

Categorizing the bicycle network by LTS is also a powerful facility planning tool. Even a simple visual inspection of the LTS map can reveal places where “islands” of low-stress connectivity are cut-off by higher stress roadways. Low-stress accessibility analysis offers a more sophisticated and objective approach to assessing how access to jobs and other destinations via low-stress bike routes varies across the region. Low-stress employment accessibility involves analyzing the number or percentage of area jobs that are accessible to households within a certain distance. Access to other types of destinations can be calculated in the same way. However, because there are so many different types of destinations that people may bike to, MATPB developed a measure of overall destination accessibility that combines 25 different types of destinations weighted based on their importance. This type of analysis highlights disparities in accessibility, and allows planners to identify routes where improvements will have the most significant impact.

MATPB has been sharing our LTS maps and low-stress accessibility analysis with local governments in the Madison area and is exploring additional uses for this data.

This report provides a more thorough description of MATPB’s LTS methodology, the Low-Stress Route Finder, and low-stress accessibility analysis.
**ARTICLES**

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**MATPB-CARPC Joint Work Group Report Identifies Ideas for Closer Collaboration between the Two Regional Planning Agencies**

The Madison Area Transportation Planning Board and Capital Area Regional Planning Commission created a joint Work Group to explore options and prepare a report outlining ideas for achieving more integrated regional land use, environmental, and transportation planning. The Work Group met several times and recently completed its report, which was reviewed with the boards of the two agencies at a recent joint meeting.

A list of short-term methods for improved interagency coordination and engagement methods was recommended for immediate implementation in the next 1-2 years. These actions could be undertaken within the budgets of the two agencies and do not involve changes to staffing or the governance structure of the agencies. The recommendations include co-locating the staffs of the two agencies and aligning the planning cycles of the land use and transportation plans.

Potential medium (3-5 years) and long-term (5+ years) ideas were also identified for consideration in the future after many of the short-term actions have been implemented. Some of these would involve changes to the administrative and governance structure of the agencies, which would require new MPO and RPC agreements. Because of this, an incremental approach was recommended to implementation of actions to achieve closer collaboration between the agencies.

The Work Group report will be published on the MATPB website once the board officially accepts the report at its next meeting. Staff of the two agencies will then begin work to advance the short-term recommendations, starting with staff co-location.

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**New Staff at MATPB**

Ben Lyman joined MATPB as a transportation planner in early January 2019. As a transportation and land use planner for the City and Borough of Juneau (CBJ), Alaska, Ben led Juneau’s non-motorized and transit planning projects as well as comprehensive, small-area, and parking management plans. During this time, Ben also served as staff to coordinated transportation providers, provided mobility management and travel training assistance to agencies, and worked to prevent and remove barriers to access. After leaving the CBJ, Ben facilitated community integration outings for adults experiencing disabilities in Portland, Oregon.

Ben earned Bachelor’s degrees in both Environmental Studies and Urban Planning from the University of Utah in Salt Lake City. He has taught alpine skiing and snowboarding throughout the west, guided hiking and mountain biking trips in Alaska, and is thrilled to have relocated to Madison where he looks forward to riding his bicycle year-round.