



Tony Evers

Office of the Governor | State of Wisconsin

March 10, 2026

The Honorable Sean Duffy
Secretary
United States Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Duffy:

I write to ask your immediate action to advance the critically important Blatnik Bridge reconstruction project in Northern Wisconsin, which will be the largest bridge reconstruction project in Wisconsin's history. Without your immediate action, this critically needed project will see harmful delays, not only making the project more expensive but negatively impacting the lives and livelihoods of families, businesses, and industries across Northern Wisconsin.

Built in 1961, more than 33,000 vehicles cross the John A. Blatnik Bridge each day, and each year, more than 265,000 trucks transporting nearly \$4 billion in goods pass over the Blatnik Bridge. Many businesses across the upper Midwest rely on the bridge to reach the Port of Duluth-Superior, which is the largest U.S. port on the Great Lakes and recognized as one of the most efficient, centrally located multimodal hubs in North America. The bridge is also one of the largest marine links for U.S. trade with Canada, the top trade partner of Wisconsin and the United States.

As you know, Wisconsin was awarded a federal Nationally Significant Multimodal Freight and Highway Projects program (INFRA) grant in 2024 for the reconstruction of the Blatnik Bridge. With Wisconsin's investment of \$400 million in state funds and the execution of the \$1.0584 billion federal INFRA grant in October 2024, Wisconsin immediately got to work to move forward on this critical project. Per the financial agreement approved for this project, the INFRA grant will be split between the project states, 53-47 percent, with Wisconsin receiving the majority share of federal funds due to the reconstruction of the Wisconsin approach to the bridge being more significant.

The Request for Qualifications was released on July 30, 2025; the shortlisted contractor teams were announced on October 31, 2025; and the Request for Proposals was released on November 10, 2025. The project is scheduled for letting in June 2026. To date, the Wisconsin Department of Transportation has spent millions of dollars to purchase essential real estate, and longtime Wisconsin businesses have relocated or will be shortly to enable the project. Detour routes in Superior are being upgraded this spring to accommodate the amended traffic patterns when the bridge is closed.

The construction work, scheduled to begin later this year, will employ 1,100 workers annually. This is a significant economic investment in Wisconsin, made possible by the assistance offered by this INFRA grant. This grant was awarded just in time, as the Blatnik Bridge will need to be closed by 2030 due to safety precautions. However, absent your signature on the pending grant amendment to release the federal

INFRA grant funds, the project is at risk of not moving forward on schedule, with major consequences. The timing of this project has been closely developed by all parties, and not moving forward immediately will delay bridge construction, force a prolonged bridge closure, and raise costs. Inflation alone on a project of this size has been estimated to cost \$80 million more per year of delay, and this cost does not account for other rework and rescheduling that will be required.

Wisconsin has also applied and continues to apply financial controls to this project and is reporting regularly to Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) partners. An example of these controls is the establishment of a "State to State Financial Agreement" to ensure clear governance and accountability standards for transparent stewardship of these public funds. Wisconsin has a clear track record of abiding by Federal Financial Plan requirements put forth by 23 U.S.C. § 106, Congress, FHWA, and the U.S. Department of Transportation.

I urge you to sign the INFRA grant agreement amendment that was filed with your office in October 2025, so that the project team can confirm with the two shortlisted contractor teams that the project is moving forward on its planned timeline without delay.

Thank you in advance for your action on this project. A newly constructed Blatnik Bridge will stand as a symbol of innovative infrastructure, economic development, collaboration, and all that moves Wisconsin "Forward."

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Tony Evers".

Tony Evers
Governor