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#### Contact

**Cameron Bump**  
Dept of Natural Resources  
715-839-2786  
Cameron.Bump@Wisconsin.gov

#### Resources

[http://dnr.wi.gov/org/es/science/dot\\_coop.htm#leaders](http://dnr.wi.gov/org/es/science/dot_coop.htm#leaders)

DNR web page with links to the liaison list and other approvals information.

*Culverts: Proper Use and Installation*

TIC Bulletin #15, updated in 2004, includes details on Trans 207 and other approvals plus a list of resources.

*Culverts: Not Just Something to Pass Over!*

UW-Extension program from TIC video library discusses culvert planning, design and ecological impact.

## DNR creates single points of contact

**THE WISCONSIN** Department of Natural Resources recently designated a network of Transportation Liaisons to act as "single points of contact" for local units of government seeking information on approvals needed to build, reconstruct or maintain local roads.

According to Cameron Bump, Statewide Transportation Liaison for the DNR, the Local Roads Initiative responds to requests from counties, cities, towns and villages for a process that makes it easier to find answers and keep projects moving forward. Twenty liaisons familiar with road construction and safety issues are located throughout the state, each person serving local agencies in multiple counties.

The Transportation Liaisons, who have experience working with WisDOT on state highway projects, will help local street and road officials determine if a project requires DNR approvals, which permits and approvals to get and whether a specific activity involves approvals from other state or federal agencies. Activities that might require permits/approvals include:

- Bridge and culvert replacements
- Repairs to flood-damaged roads
- Road reconstruction or rehabilitation
- Ditch cleaning, shoulder widening and maintenance
- New roads, expansions or realignments

#### Improved process

Besides designating a one-stop source for information, Bump says the program debuts an improved review process. "We are tailoring it to be more relevant to transportation projects," he notes. "This involves asking the right questions, updating our forms and the directions for permit applications."

The goal is to simplify the approach to approvals and keep it consistent with the rules on minimizing environmental impact. Existing laws and permit fees still apply. But now local road officials have direct access to a single individual who can handle

the majority of approval-related issues or get answers from other DNR experts.

Bump suggests local governments contact the Transportation Liaison about state approvals in the early planning stages of a road project. This gives local agencies and the DNR a chance to identify and resolve potential regulatory issues before spending scarce local resources.

Local road officials also can research environmental considerations that govern the standard conditions for bridge and culvert replacements under Trans 207. *Culverts: Proper Use and Installation*, a fact sheet available free

from the Transportation Information Center, reviews the planning and technical aspects of culvert design and construction, and permit requirements.

#### Working together

Bump notes that local roads projects are where a single point of contact can make a difference. "Getting to know the people in local agencies is important to this effort," he adds. "It is another practical step toward providing improved customer assistance to local governments."

Local officials can find out more about the Transportation Liaison serving their county on the DNR website (see *Resources*, left). ■

## Sign retroreflectivity: on the road to compliance

*ED. NOTE:* The new minimum retroreflectivity standard for highway signs adopted by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) is two years into a three-tier, phase-in period that requires public agencies to implement sign management or assessment methods, and systematically replace signs that do not meet requirements. Participants at Transportation Information Center (TIC) sign retroreflectivity workshops last fall offered a snapshot of how local street and highway departments in Wisconsin plan to apply the standards. TIC instructor Don Walker reviews the requirements and what he learned.

#### OVER 400 LOCAL AGENCY

officials took time to learn about the new highway sign nighttime visibility requirements at a series of TIC workshops in September. Initially, many expressed frustration over having to meet additional requirements at a time when they have limited resources. Results from surveys conducted before and after each workshop provide insights into current practice and plans to meet the requirements.

Only 12 percent of agencies that attended the workshops are con-

ducting organized, documented night sign inspections although the method has been part of *MUTCD (Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices)* guidance for more than 50 years. On the positive side, 86 percent selected a method for future inspection, and learned about the benefits of a sign inventory and how to evaluate the new sheeting materials.

#### Standard resets requirement

MUTCD always required that most signs be visible at night. Following extensive research, the new standards define the minimum level of retroreflectivity for each sign color. The regulations call on highway agencies to develop procedures that ensure their signs meet the new requirements.

While it may be obvious during the day that some signs are in poor condition, the only way to be sure of good nighttime visibility has been to do a night inspection. New equipment is available to measure daytime sign retroreflectivity. Since the equipment is expensive and the process labor ▼