

LRIP up for renewal

The highly successful Local Roads Improvement Program (LRIP), which funnelled nearly \$43 million to municipalities for local roads since 1992, is up for renewal. Begun in the 1991-93 biennium, the program is unique for its "hands-off" approach to funding local roads. Project selection, lettings and administration are handled locally.

"LRIP is a good investment," says Doug Duckert, Director of WisDOT's Office of Local Highway Programs. "In fiscal '92 and '93, the state put 19.1 in million LRIP dollars into projects that totalled \$68.1 million. This boosts Wisconsin's economy and upgrades local roads at the same time."

Town road LRIP projects are selected by county-wide TRIP (Town Roads Improvement Program) committees. While some TRIP committees simply divide the money evenly, others are pooling the money to pay for larger projects. In Jefferson County for example, the TRIP committee approved 17 projects in the 92-93 biennium, at an average cost of \$3,855 each (matched locally by an equal or greater amount). In 94-95, they approved four projects ranging in cost from \$11,000 to \$22,000.

"In the first biennium of the program, I think the towns were concerned that the program would not last, so they

divided the money equally between them," says Jefferson County Highway Commissioner Ken Rolefson. "They found that they didn't get much of a job. This time they have more faith that the program would continue and the committee selected four projects." The county holds a biennial meeting of town chairs who select five to represent them on the TRIP committee.

LRIP in the next budget

The Governor is still working on his 1995-97 biennial budget proposal, so LRIP's future is not yet decided. WisDOT's Duckert expects that the program will continue with at least the same level of funding (\$21 million). Local decision-making is both popular and effective he says, and will change "over my dead body!" WisDOT's TRANSLINKS 21 draft plan identifies an additional \$1.5 billion for this program over the next 25 years.

Legislators will be considering LRIP as part of their budget deliberations beginning right after the first of the year. This is the time to express your opinion of LRIP to your state senator and representatives.

If you have questions about the LRIP program, contact Doug Duckert at 608/266-2963 or Mary Forlenza, Chief of Local Roads, at 608/264-8724.

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