



Understanding WisDOT's Project Lifecycle for County Success

10:30 – 11:30 am



Understanding WisDOT's Project Lifecycle for County Success

Wisconsin Counties Association Annual Conference

September 22, 2026

Life Cycle of a WisDOT Project

- Two types of projects use state and/or federal funds:
 - State administered
 - Locally administered

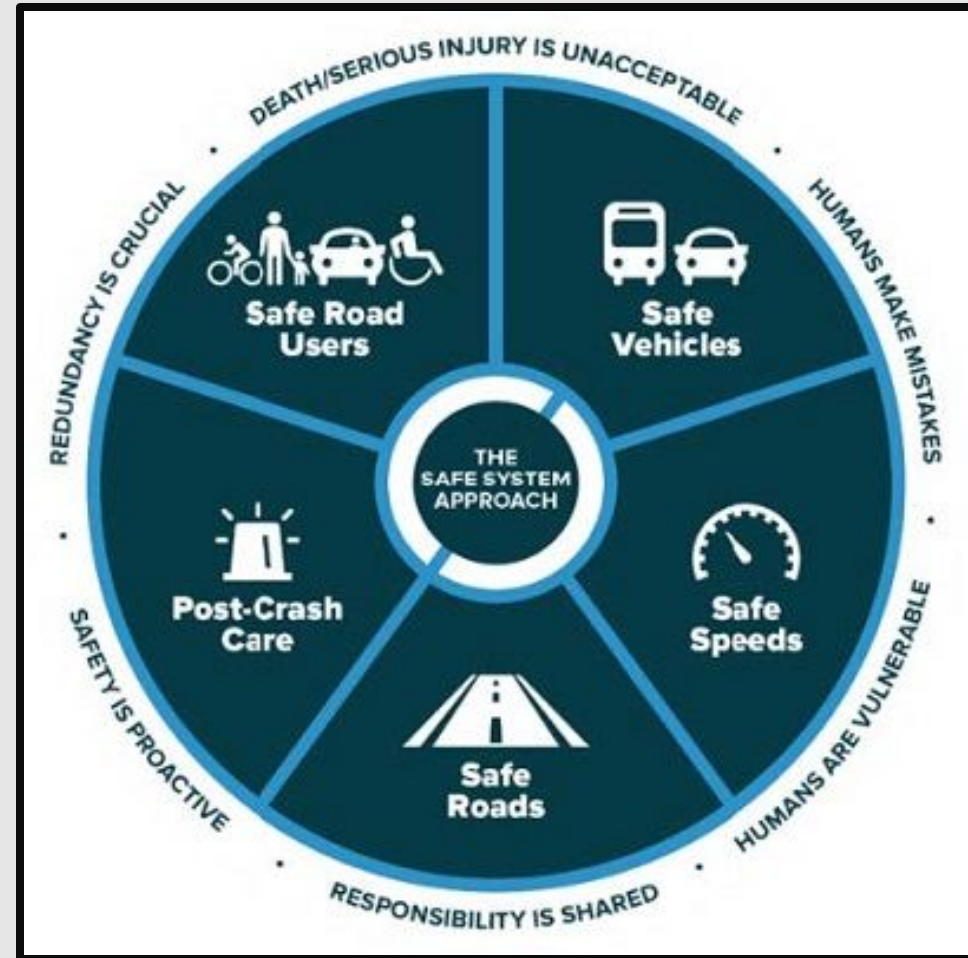
State Let and Administered Programs	Locally Let and Administered Programs
Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP)	Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)
High Risk Rural Roads (HRRR)	Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Program (CMAQ)
Surface Transportation Program (STP)	Local Roads Improvement Program (LRIP)
Local Bridge Program	Agricultural Roads Improvement Program (ARIP)
	Local Small Structures Improvement Program (LSSIP)



Wisconsin's Safety Approach

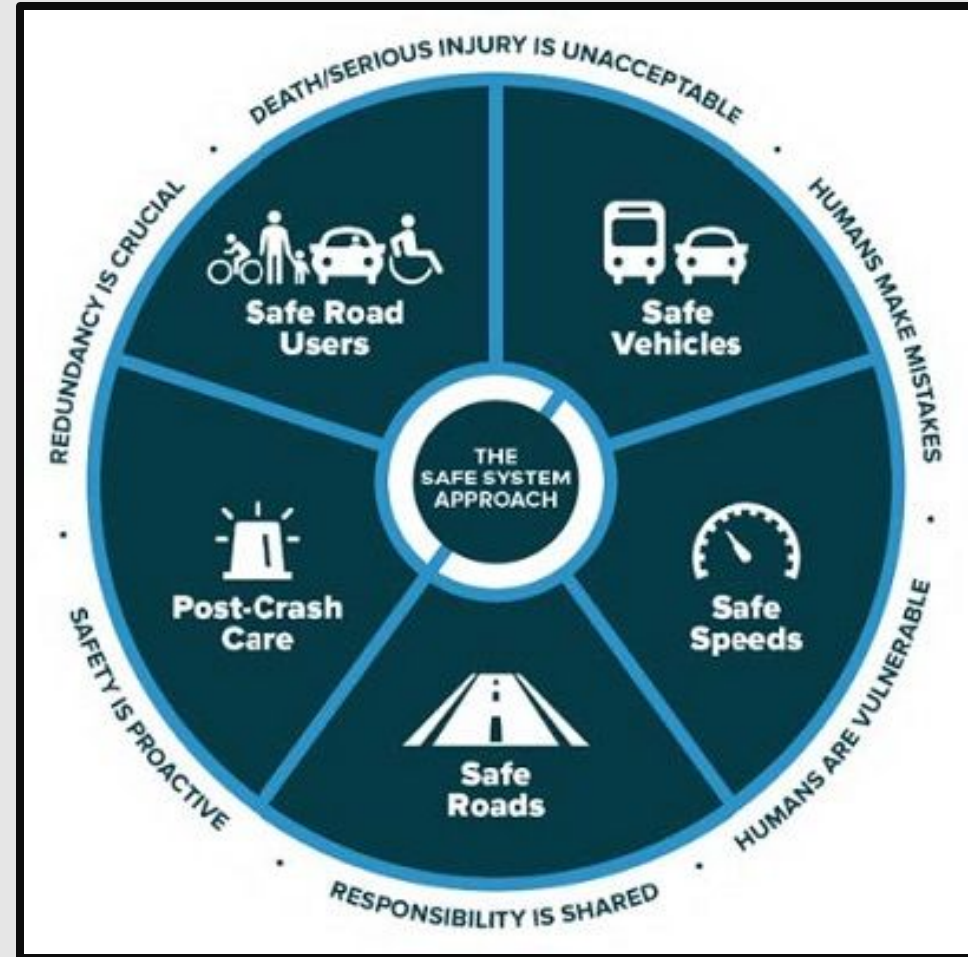
"Safety in all modes of transportation is our top priority at WisDOT. It's at the center of everything we do to modernize our transportation system and improve the quality of life in communities across Wisconsin."

- WisDOT Secretary Kristina Boardman



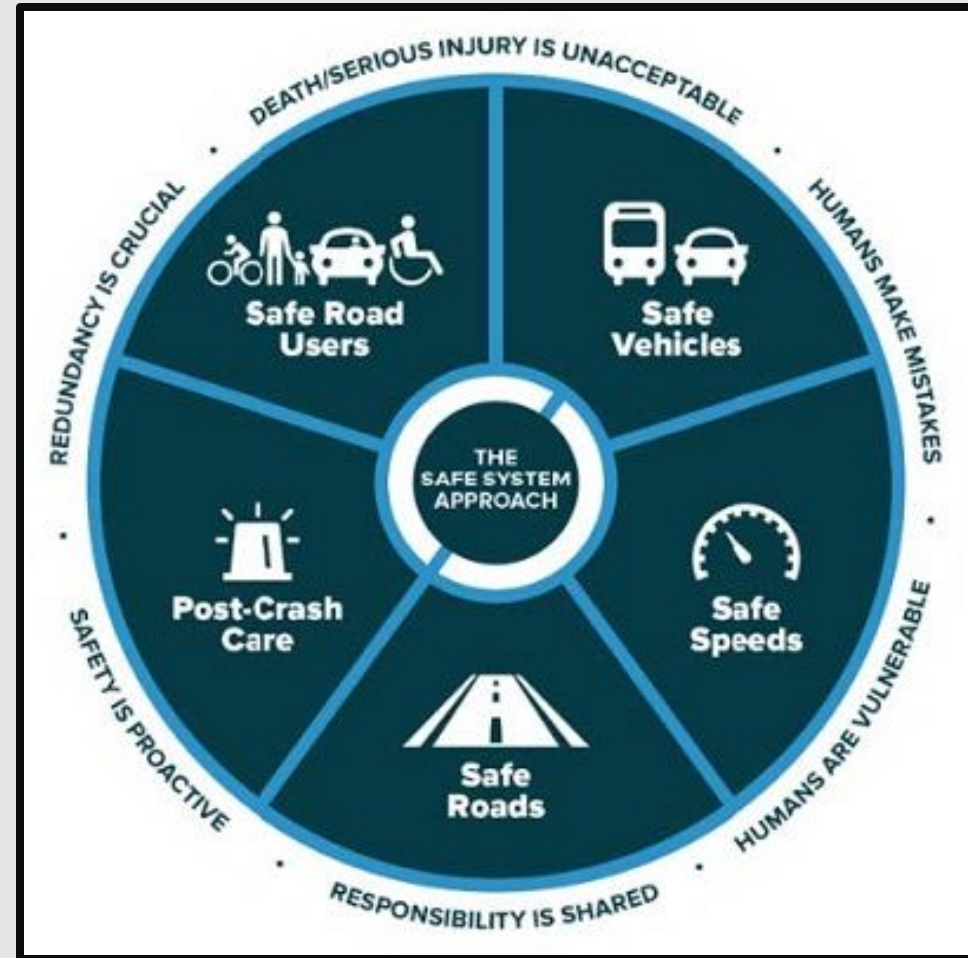
Safe System Approach

- Death or serious injury is unacceptable
- Humans make mistakes
- Humans are vulnerable
- Responsibility is shared
- Safety is proactive
- Redundancy is crucial



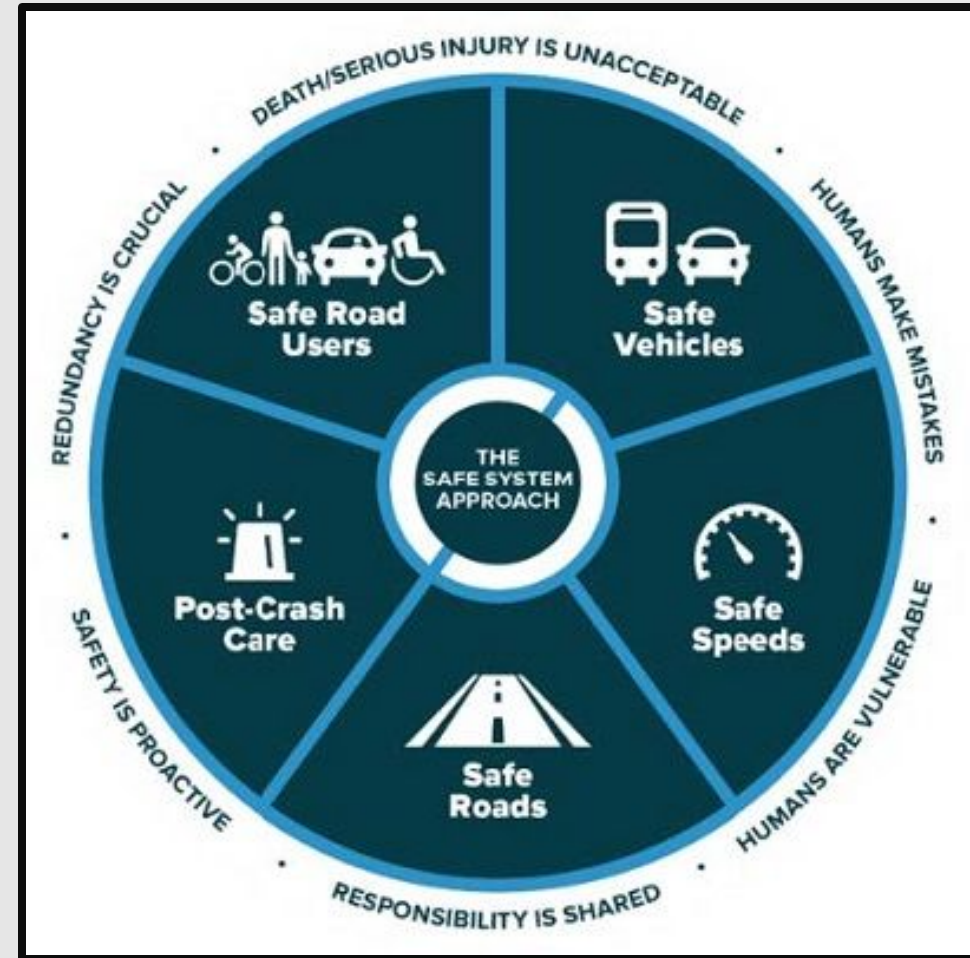
Safe System Approach

- Safe road users
- Safe vehicles
- Safe speeds
- Safe roads
- Post-crash care



Safe System Approach

- What does a Safe System Approach look like for your community?
 - Roadway network safety
 - Appropriate speed zones
 - Access to driver education opportunities
 - Teen/adult
 - Commercial drivers
 - Emergency responder coverage and distance to regional trauma centers
 - Does your system carry vehicles with unique safety challenges?
 - Farm equipment
 - Amish or Mennonite communities



Safe System Approach

- Where are your gaps? Tools to consider:
 - Crashes:
<https://transportal.cee.wisc.edu/partners/community-maps/>
 - Driving schools:
<https://wisconsindot.gov/Pages/dmv/teen-driver/teen-hw-apply/schools.aspx>
 - Trauma facilities:
<https://dhsgis.wi.gov/dhs/traumacare/>
 - Land use maps and growth projections



Life Cycle of a WisDOT Project

State Let and Administered Programs	Locally Let and Administered Programs
Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP)	Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)
High Risk Rural Roads (HRRR)	Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Program (CMAQ)
Surface Transportation Program (STP)	Local Roads Improvement Program (LRIP)
Local Bridge Program	Agricultural Roads Improvement Program (ARIP)
	Local Small Structures Improvement Program (LSSIP)

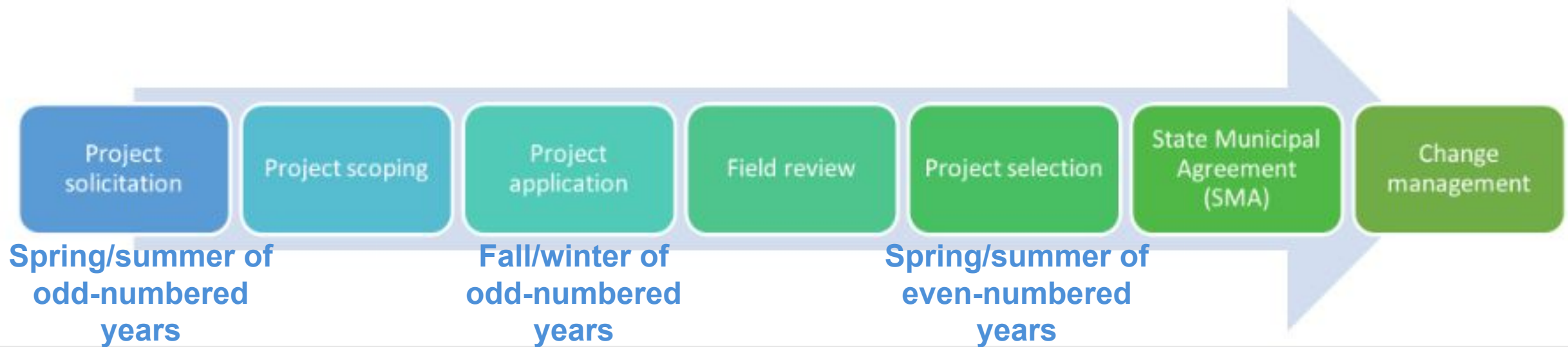


Local Programs Projects: State vs. Locally Let

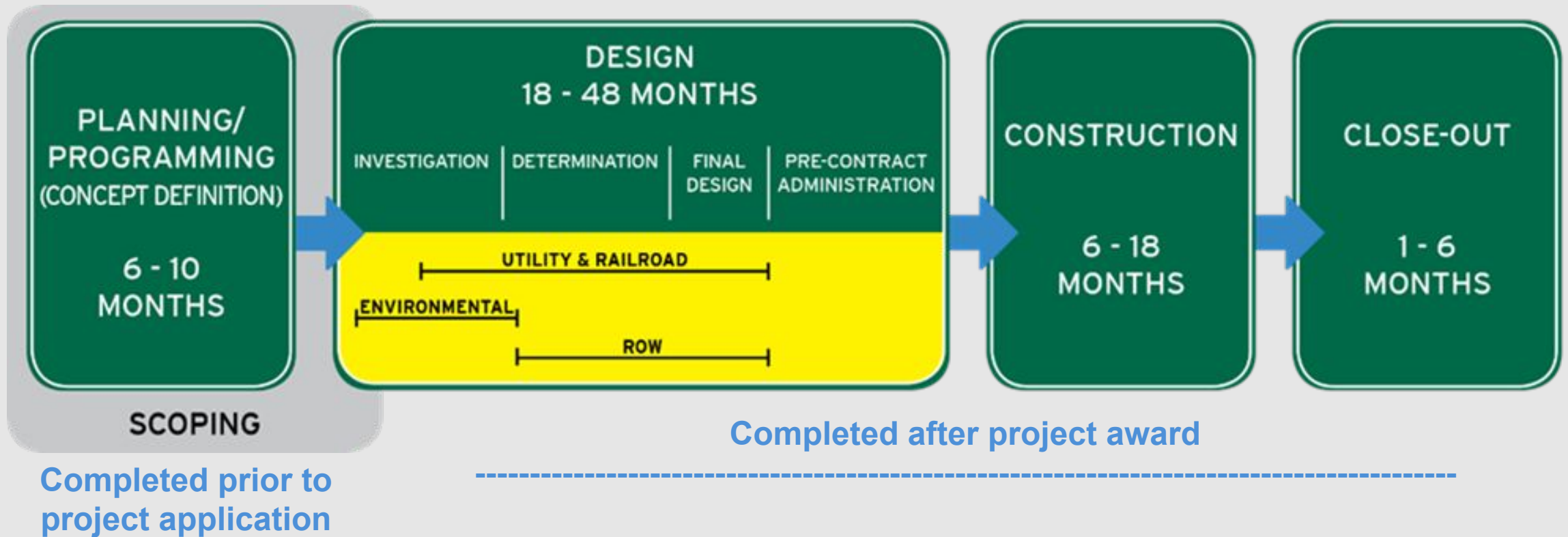
- Projects funded through WisDOT programs have different life cycles and requirements depending on a variety of factors:
 - **Type of improvement program**
 - Depending on requirements, projects may need more upfront work to demonstrate eligibility
 - For example, HSIP requires a crash history and analysis demonstrating the treatment will address the problem
 - **Program funding source**
 - Projects using federal aid through state administered programs can take longer to deliver
 - **Project type**
 - Different designs may require longer design times
 - **Level of additional coordination**
 - Multi-jurisdictional projects require additional coordination (state, other municipalities, MPOs)



Life Cycle of a State Let Project: Initial Steps



Life Cycle of a State Let Project: Design and Construction



Life Cycle of a State Let Project: Closeout/Completion



Be sure to keep in contact with the appropriate WisDOT project manager in order to ensure that all project closeout documentation are submitted and processes are followed.

Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP)

- Objective: achieve significant reduction in traffic fatalities and serious injuries on all public road roads
- Four-year program
- Eligible activities include but not limited to:
 - Intersection safety improvements (channelization, turn lanes, control changes)
 - Installing or modifying traffic signals (retroreflective backplates, YFA, signal head per lane)
 - Installing signs, delineators, flashing warning lights
 - Access modifications
 - Improving sight distance
 - Shoulder improvements (widening, edge line or shoulder rumble strips)
 - Installing guardrails, barriers, and crash attenuators



Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP)

- High Risk Rural Roads Program
 - Local rural minor and major collector corridors
 - Run-off-the-road crashes
- WisDOT staff screen and vet the local network for eligible locations
- Counties can receive a corridor safety evaluation (CSE) on WisDOT identified corridors
 - Counties are not required to make improvements or pursue HRRRP funding if they accept the CSE
- WisDOT consultant will then evaluate the corridors for eligible safety improvements
- Counties are provided CSE which also includes a cost estimate



Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP)

- Available safety resources:

- WisDOT region safety staff
- State Patrol traffic safety programs
- County Traffic Safety Commission

- FHWA Proven Safety Countermeasures (PSC)

- NHTSA Countermeasures That Work

- Application timeline:

- Biannual solicitations

- SFY2027-2030

- Mid-Cycle: February 15, 2027

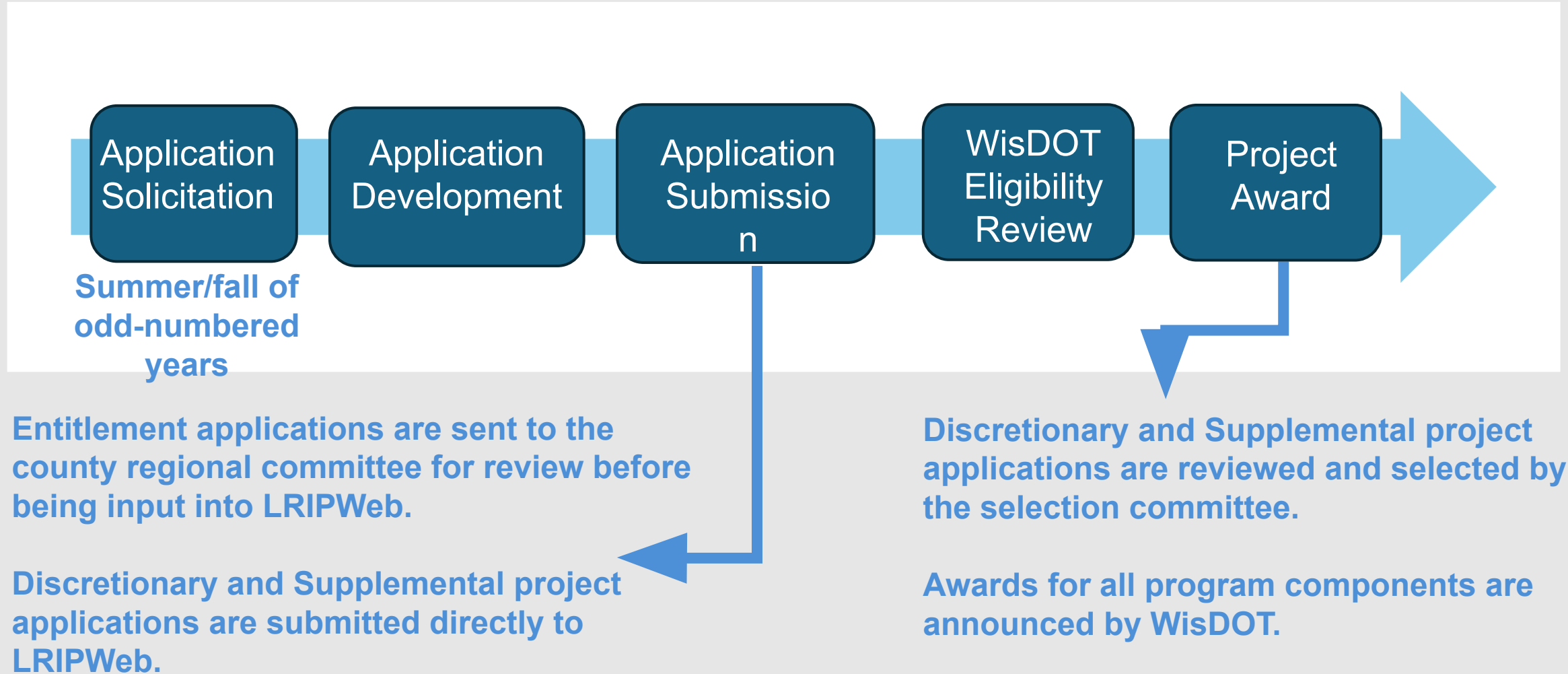
- SFY2028-2031

- Standard: August 15, 2027

- Mid-Cycle: February 15, 2028



Life Cycle of a Locally Let Project: LRIP Initial Steps



Life Cycle of a Locally Let Project: Delivery and Construction

Sponsors
are sent
SMAs

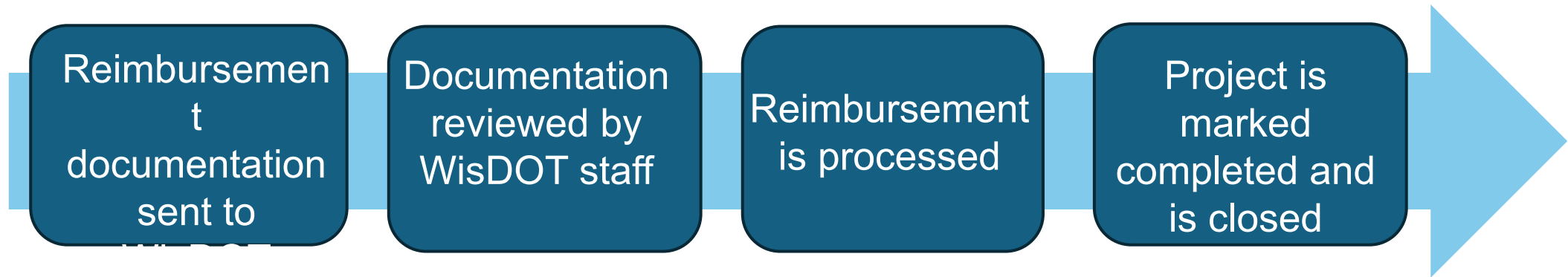
Projects are
bid out &
awarded

Engineering
&
Construction

Project
complete &
documentation
compiled

Pace is dependent on project and local sponsor

Life Cycle of a Locally Let Project: Reimbursement and Closeout



Timeline is impacted if incomplete documentation is submitted

Important Considerations for all Programs: Scoping

- Accurate project scoping is essential to project success. Poorly scoped projects can create issues with:
 - Project schedules
 - Project funding
- Location, location, location
 - Environmental concerns (endangered plants or animals, wetlands)
 - Initial site conditions
 - Existing or new structures involved

Important Considerations for all Projects: Scheduling

- Develop reasonable schedules
 - Ensure that enough time is budgeted for delivery and design
 - Consider other items such as railroad involvement, real estate acquisitions, utilities coordination
 - Changing schedule dates can impact project feasibility and future funding availability
- Projects that are delayed and rescheduled into future fiscal years potentially reduce the funding available to fund new projects. That is why it is vitally important projects are delivered on time, on budget, and within scope.



Important Considerations for all Programs: Estimates

- Accurate project estimates at time of application are essential
 - Projects are typically capped at the time of project award
 - Change management may be available, depending on the program, but should not be assumed.
 - Poor estimating may result in additional local costs
 - Scope changes may need to be re-evaluated by the selection committee



Local Program Scheduling Tool

Wisconsin Department of Transportation Local Program Project Scheduling Tool

LPA Project Design Schedule Tool					
2	Sponsor		Environment Complexity Checklist	Yes	No
3	County		Real Estate > 0.5 acres	☐	☐
4	Roadway/ Structure ID		Curb Ramps in Project Limits	☐	☐
5	Project Limits		Roadway/ Structure Widening	☐	☐
5	Project Length		Project to Impact Public Land	☐	☐
7	AADT Traffic Count/ Count Year		Excavation Deeper than 2ft	☐	☐
8	Program Cycle (Start/ End Year)		Historical Property in Limits	☐	☐
9	Project Type	Bridge Replacement	Archaeological Site in Limits	☐	☐
0	Design Funding (Estimated Cost)	Yes under \$200k	Project to Impact Floodplain	☐	☐
1	Real Estate	None	Hazardous Material Open Site	☐	☐
2	Railroad	None within 1000 ft	Endangered Species Mitigation	☐	☐
3	Utility Timeline	Bridge Replacement	Wetland or Waterway Impacts	☐	☐
4	Environmental Complexity	Low	Public Concerns with Project	☐	☐
5	Minimum Project Timeline	14 Months	Other Project Concerns	☐	☐
6					
7	Recommended Schedule	Deadline	Schedule Feasibility Check (Do not use.)		
8	SMA & Authorization Approved	12/1/2024	SMA & Authorization Approved	6/14/2025	
9	Consultant Selection (DT1515)	1/1/2025	Consultant Selection (DT1515)	7/14/2025	
10	Design Contract Authorized	3/1/2025	Design Contract Authorized	9/14/2025	
11	Environmental Document Signed	7/1/2025	Environmental Document Signed	1/14/2026	
12	Design Study Report Signed	9/1/2025	Design Study Report Signed	3/14/2026	
13	Plat Recorded/ Real Estate Start	N/A	Plat Recorded/ Real Estate Start	N/A	
14	PSE	11/1/2025	Earliest PSE	5/14/2026	
15	Recommended Letting	2/1/2026	Earliest Letting	8/14/2026	
16	Construction Year	2026			



Estimating Construction Costs

WisDOT Tools:

- Wisconsin Department of Transportation Local project tools
- There are historic bridge costs from the Bureau of Structures.
- There are templates to help create bridge and roadway estimates.
- Wisconsin Department of Transportation Estimate development
 - Statewide estimating website with historic bid data, recent trends,
 - Wisconsin Department of Transportation Estimating tools
Similar project tools, Asphalt Price Map, mobilization



Estimating Design Costs

When preparing to apply for federal funding, work with the regional local program manager to help in estimating design costs for the project at time of application.

LOCAL PROGRAM PROJECT DELIVERY CONTACTS				
SW REGION	SE REGION	NE REGION	NC REGION	NW REGION
PLANNING SUPERVISORS				
Arthur Sommerfield (608) 785-9952	Hans Higdon (262) 548-5924	Anne Ebent (920) 492-5635	Jordan Kelbley (715) 421-8041	Bob Heldt (715) 836-2857
LOCAL PROGRAM MANAGERS				
Rob Winterton (608) 789-7879	Eric Nitschke (262) 548-8796	Alex Dums (920) 492-5707	Evan Maves (715) 365-5778	Randy Kirk (715) 392-7860
Brandi Workman (608) 785-9047		Kelsey Lorenz (920) 492-0142		

Local Program Alternative Contracting Opportunities

What is 2025 Wisconsin Act 104?

Background:

- 2025 Senate Bill 461 → signed March 20, 2026
- Per Wis. Stats. 84.062:
 - Expands WisDOT's authority for alternative contracting methods
 - Moves beyond traditional design-bid-build
- Design-build proven effective for large, complex highway projects



The Challenge – Why Small Projects Struggle

The Problem for Small Local Projects...

- Disproportionate administrative overhead (separate RFQ/RFP processes)
- Stipend payments drain limited budgets
- Limited small contractor competition (bonding/resource barriers)
- High risk premiums inflate costs
- Regulatory burdens outweigh time-saving benefits



The Solution – Bundling Creates Viability

Strategic Bundling Approach: Combine multiple low-cost projects with similar scope into one large contract.

Three Major Benefits:

1. Reduced Administrative Overhead
2. Massive Economies of Scale
3. Design Standardization & Assembly-Line Speed



The Trade-offs – Significant Challenges

Challenge #1: Limits small contractors

- Small contractors likely unable to compete with larger contractors
- Lack bonding capacity and management resources
- Loss of local economic benefits

Challenge #2: Inter-Municipal Politics

- Funding: local match
- Schedule conflicts: prioritization of work among various LPAs

Challenge #3: Systemic Project Risk

- One delay affects all: Environmental issues, utility conflicts, or disputes at one site freeze entire contract
- Unaffected towns suffer from other sites' problems



How Can it Work?

Success Requires:

Careful Project Selection:

- Truly similar scope (e.g., 5 bridge replacements, 10 culvert projects)
- Geographic proximity for mobilization efficiency
- Similar readiness levels (environmental clearances, utility coordination)

Strong Inter-Municipal Agreements:

- Clear local match
- Develop and agree on cost overrun protocols
- Agreed-upon construction scheduling

Appropriate Scale:

- Large enough to achieve the benefits
- Small enough to maintain manageable coordination



WisDOT's Current Approach

Strategic Focus:

- Committed to developing design-build methods
- Prioritizing high-cost projects
- Goals:
 - Offset procurement costs
 - Maximize contractor innovation
 - Focus on projects where benefits clearly outweigh drawbacks



Thank you Questions?

