

REVITALIZE

Hwys 13, 54, & 73

WISCONSIN RAPIDS

Wisconsin Rapids, located in Wood County, central Wisconsin, is a city with a population of approximately 18,800.

The city was founded in the late 1830s, capitalizing on the Wisconsin River's rapids, which offered ideal locations for water-powered sawmills. Today, the economy of Wisconsin Rapids is driven by thriving healthcare, manufacturing, and retail sectors.

State Highways: Weaving Wisconsin's Communities Together

State highways extend through city boundaries, often adopting local street names and characteristics within city limits. These roadways are integral to the community's infrastructure and strengthen connections to neighboring communities and businesses. The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) has designated some of these thoroughfares as Connecting Highways, as they carry state highway traffic through the cities and villages.

WisDOT has identified about 1,650 lane miles of Connecting Highways across 116 municipalities. These municipalities receive Connecting Highway Aid to help with costs associated with increased traffic and maintenance on roads that connect segments of the state highway system.



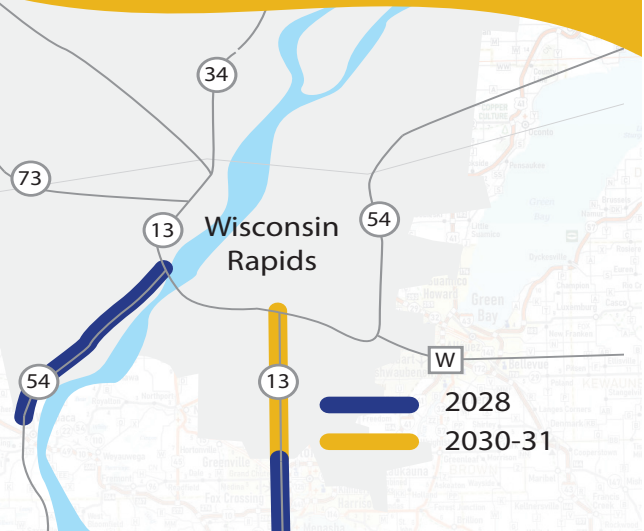
Wisconsin Rapids has nearly 48 lane miles of Connecting Highways, ranking fifth in the state for total lane mileage and third for Connecting Highway lane miles per capita.

The Cost of Aging Highways

Three state trunk highways (STHs)—STH 13, STH 54, and STH 73—traverse Wisconsin Rapids, serving as critical Connecting Highways. These aging roadways, untouched by major upgrades for decades, present significant challenges for the city, its residents, and its businesses.

Wisconsin Rapids allocates approximately \$200,000 annually for concrete patching on STH 13, STH 54, and STH 73. However, stopgap measures fall short of the more comprehensive treatments demanded by the highways' advanced age and deterioration.

Wisconsin Rapids: Short-Term Patches Versus Long-Term Solutions



Projects scheduled, WisDOT interactive map, Sept. 2025. Dependent on future funding.



Beyond maintenance costs, the poor condition of these highways and delayed improvement affects the Wisconsin Rapids residents and businesses in multiple ways:

- **Ride Quality and Vehicle Wear:** Deteriorating pavement reduces ride comfort and accelerates vehicle wear and tear, leading to higher repair costs for motorists.
- **Economic Disruption:** The highways primarily run through non-residential zones, hosting nearly 200 businesses and establishments. Annual lane closures for patching disrupt access, deterring customers and impacting revenue.
- **Higher Costs in the Future:** The cost of infrastructure continues to rise steadily. Communities face escalating maintenance expenses, only to encounter even higher costs when improvement projects are scheduled. These expenses include the municipal share of improvement projects, as well as any necessary underground infrastructure upgrades.

The Long and the Short of It

Wisconsin has long struggled to secure sufficient transportation funding for lasting infrastructure improvements. Too often, the state and municipalities stretch limited budgets, relying on costly and temporary fixes. Without a sustainable, long-term funding solution, Wisconsin jeopardizes critical investments needed to fuel economic growth and keep the state moving forward.