



August 15, 2018

Secretary Dave Ross
Wisconsin Department of Transportation
4822 Madison Yards Way
Madison, WI 53705

RE: Transportation Economic Assistance program

Dear Secretary Ross:

On behalf of the Wisconsin Economic Development Association (WEDA), I would ask the Department of Transportation (DOT) to consider including in its 2019-21 agency budget request a statutory change to ensure the Transportation Economic Assistance (TEA) program will provide direct grant funding for jobs retained by a transportation improvement project.

For over 30 years, Wisconsin communities have leveraged TEA funding to facilitate transportation projects that retain, as well as attract, private sector employment and capital investments. Unfortunately, recent programmatic shifts at DOT have compromised TEA's value-proposition by restricting its ability to be used for projects that retain existing jobs.

These changes have not only diminished the value of this important economic development tool, but they are also in direct conflict with the fundamentals of Wisconsin's economic environment. Case in point: record-low unemployment, coupled with an aging population, a declining in-migration rate, and rising automation applications, strongly suggests that retaining jobs and attracting new capital investment is just as important as job creation.

To address this issue, WEDA recommends section 84.185 of the Wisconsin Statutes be amended to equally recognize the benefits of job creation and job retention under the TEA program. More specifically, WEDA believes state law should be modified to explicitly provide \$5,000 in grant funding for each job retained as the result of an improvement or economic development project.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of WEDA's request. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact WEDA Legislative Affairs Director Michael Welsh at (608) 234-2940 or mwelsh@weda.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brian".

Brian Doudna, EDFP
WEDA Executive Director

cc: Jennifer Esser, DOT Assistant Deputy Secretary