



## FDM 3-20-1 Local Program Bridge Approach Length Eligible for Federal Funding

May 15, 2025

### 1.1 Introduction

FHWA and WisDOT limit local bridge approach costs to only those approach costs that are necessary to render the bridge serviceable (to reach the attainable touchdown points using current standards). The reason for this eligibility restriction is that local bridge funds are **primarily** meant for bridge work. If bridge funds are used for extended approaches or other non-bridge work, then there are fewer local bridges that can be replaced or rehabilitated. **The funding policy has been written to help facilitate more projects through the Local Bridge Program by being more efficient with the dollars spent. The Local Bridge Improvement Assistance Program in Wisconsin is a dual-funded program, meaning that the non-local share of project costs can consist of federal or state funds, or a combination of both. When state funding is used on a local bridge project (regardless of whether it is on- or off-system), WisDOT applies the same federal eligibility criteria and restrictions for bridge approach work.**

For projects on the Federal-aid system (functionally classified above a minor collector), FHWA allows for other eligible funding (such as STP funds) for extended bridge approaches. However, for bridges located on public roads, but not located on Federal-aid highways, (**"off system bridges"**), federal funds are not eligible for bridge approach work beyond touchdown points. Touchdown points are **defined as the point where a proposed bridge approach roadway matches into the existing roadway. The sum of the lengths from each touchdown point to the bridge abutments is the "approach length."**

Any county or other unit of local government desiring to include a local bridge in the Local Bridge Program must comply with the Wisconsin Department of Transportation's Local Bridge Improvement Assistance Program Funding Policy, [FDM 3-20-1.2](#), and **"Performance Based Practical Design (PBPD)."** **The WisDOT PBPD perspective is described in [FDM 11-1-5.2](#). Design local bridge projects in accordance with the appropriate design criteria discussed elsewhere in the FDM and in the Bridge Manual.**

### 1.2 Local Bridge Improvement Assistance Program Funding Policy

This policy is intended to allow more effective use of funding for multiple bridge projects. The funding policy is broken down into four different approach length ranges: 0-100 feet, greater than 100 feet – 300 feet, greater than 300 feet – 600 feet and greater than 600 feet. The ranges are the sum of each approach length, excluding the pavement replacement section discussed in [FDM 3-20-1.3](#). Table 1.1 below shows the process required for approving the design along with the funding eligibility for each range.

#### 1.2.1 Funding Eligibility at Application

The desirable approach length is 100 feet total, however longer approach lengths up to 300 feet can be approved at project application based on sound engineering judgement. The cost estimate contained in the project application must reflect the estimated approach lengths, even if they are longer than the desirable length. Bridge approach lengths beyond 300 feet should be identified as non-participating costs in the project application.

#### 1.2.2 Funding Eligibility During Project Delivery

During the project delivery phase, projects with approaches greater than 100 feet will need proper justification and projects with approaches greater than 300 feet will need a Bridge Approach Length Justification Report.

Examples of justification at application or project delivery can include, but are not limited to:

- hydrology reports
- historical flood data
- safety data
- AADT data
- environmental considerations
- preliminary profiles/bridge plans
- other documentation to support design

For approaches greater than 100 feet to 300 feet, justify additional approach length in the Design Study Report (DSR). This range can be approved at project application or during the project delivery phase. During the project delivery phase, approval of these approaches are given when the Local Program Project Managers (LPPM) concurs with the DSR and would need to follow the change management process for any additional funding.

A Bridge Approach Length Justification Report is required when the sum of the approach lengths is greater than 300 feet and it provides the engineering justification for why the longer approaches are needed. Refer to [Attachment 1.1](#) and [1.2](#) for the Bridge Approach Length Justification Report cover sheets. If the Approach Length Justification Report is not approved, the extra approach length can remain in the project and is 100 percent locally funded.

Change management guidance can be found on the [Local Bridge Improvement Assistance website](#). Evaluations of requests for funding increases through the change management process are based upon available funding levels in the Local Bridge Program and the engineering justification provided in the request.

Questions about the policy should be directed to the regional Local Program Managers (LPMs) during application and/or LPPMs during design delivery.

**Table 1.1**  
**Funding Eligibility and Process**

	Time of Application	Project Delivery
<b>0 to 100 feet</b>		
Funding	Eligible	Eligible
Process	No justification	No justification
<b>&gt;100 feet to 300 feet</b>		
Funding	Eligible	Eligible for Change Management
Process	Justification at application (include in DSR)	Justification in DSR
<b>&gt;300 feet to 600 feet</b>		
Funding <sup>(1)</sup>	Eligible up to 300 feet	Eligible for Change Management
Process <sup>(2)</sup>	Bridge Approach Length Justification Report	Bridge Approach Length Justification Report
<b>&gt;600 feet</b>		
Funding <sup>(3)</sup>	Eligible up to 300 feet	Eligible for Change Management
Process <sup>(2)</sup>	Bridge Approach Length Justification Report	Bridge Approach Length Justification Report

<sup>(1)</sup> Approved project will include the costs associated with 300 feet of bridge approach length as eligible costs; costs attributed to the approach length beyond 300 feet will be at the local's costs. During the design process, with an approved Bridge Approach Length Justification Report, the LPA can submit Local Program Change Management for the additional costs associated with approach lengths greater than 300 feet.

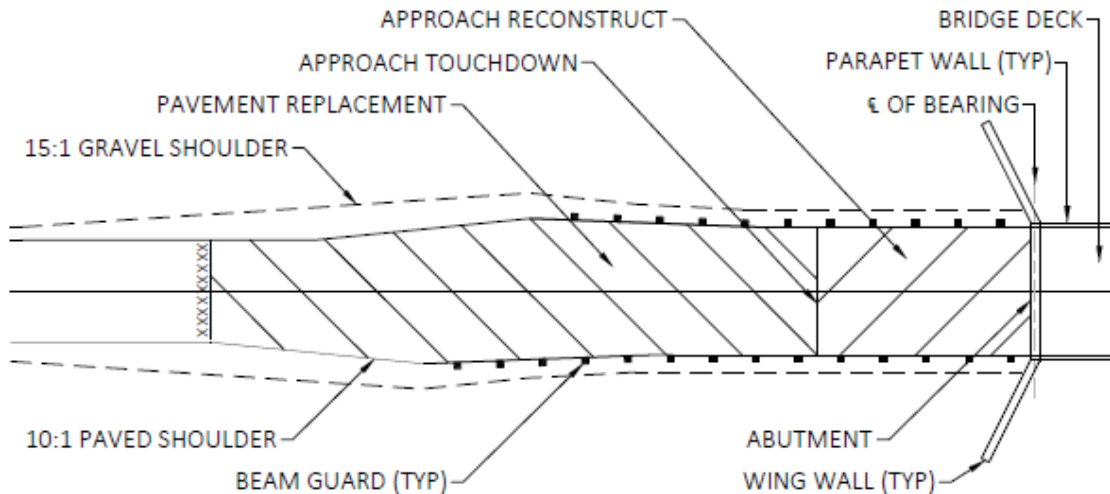
<sup>(2)</sup> An approved Bridge Approach Length Justification Report is needed for total approach lengths greater than 300 feet. Refer to the [Local Program Document Approval Matrix](#) for approval process for the Bridge Approach Length Justification Report.

<sup>(3)</sup> Locals are responsible for the additional costs for approaches over 600 feet unless other type of Federal/State funding is available or WisDOT approves additional funding through Change Management (CM).

### 1.3 Roadside Barrier on Local Program Bridges

Design roadside barrier at bridge abutments as described in [FDM 11-45](#). It is acceptable for the end of this barrier system to extend beyond the touchdown point. When the beam guard is exclusively protecting the

parapets, or a feature related to the bridge replacement, pavement replacement is eligible for federal funding from the start of the asphalt shoulder taper for the EATs to the touchdown point of the approach reconstruction. Pavement replacement is not eligible for federal funding if beam guard is protecting steep slopes or other existing conditions that are not part of the bridge reconstruction.



#### 1.4 Local Program Bridge Design Study Report

The DSR for Local Program bridges is found at the [Local Program Processes webpage](#). DSR section directions are found in [FDM 11-4](#).

#### **LIST OF ATTACHMENTS**

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|--------------------------------|--|
| <a href="#">Attachment 1.1</a> | Approach Length Justification Report, Greater than 300 feet – 600 feet |
| <a href="#">Attachment 1.2</a> | Approach Length Justification Report, Greater than 600 feet            |