1999 ASSEMBLY BILL 325

May 6, 1999 – Introduced by Representatives Albers, Porter, Jensen, M. Lehman, Klusman, Spillner, Musser, Goetsch, Sykora, Owens, Gunderson, Hahn, Grothman, Nass, Montgomery, Seratti and Kreuser, cosponsored by Senators Breske, Schultz and Huelsman. Referred to Committee on Urban and Local Affairs.

- 1 AN ACT *to repeal* 81.15 and 81.17 of the statutes; **relating to:** liability of cities,
- villages, towns and counties for damages caused by an insufficiency or want of
 repair of a highway.

Analysis by the Legislative Reference Bureau

Under current law, cities, villages, towns and counties are immune from claims arising out of the performance of a discretionary duty, or duty which requires a governmental entity to use judgment or discretion in carrying out the duty. Cities, villages, towns and counties are liable for damages of up to \$50,000 arising out of the performance of a nondiscretionary duty.

Also under current law, cities, villages, towns and counties are liable for damages of up to \$50,000 to a person or property resulting from an insufficiency or want of repair of a highway, which includes shoulders, sidewalks and bridges. Cities, villages, towns and counties are also liable for damages resulting from the accumulation of snow or ice that has existed on a highway for at least three weeks.

The Wisconsin Supreme Court in *Morris v. Juneau County*, 219 Wis. 2d 544 (1998), held that the statutory provision imposing liability on cities, villages, towns and counties for highway defects is an exception to the more general provision granting immunity to cities, villages, towns and counties from liability arising out of the performance of discretionary duties.

Finally, under current law, if the negligence or deliberate wrongdoing of a person contributes to the creation of a highway defect that results in damages to a person or property, the negligent or wrongdoing person is primarily liable and the

ASSEMBLY BILL 325

city, village, town or county is secondarily liable only if the negligent person or the person who committed the wrong does not satisfy the judgment, and the city, village, town or county is otherwise liable for the damages.

This bill eliminates the immunity exception under which cities, villages, towns and counties may be held liable for an insufficiency or want of repairs of a highway or for an accumulation of snow or ice that has existed on a highway for at least three weeks. The bill also eliminates secondary liability for cities, villages, towns and counties.

For further information see the *local* fiscal estimate, which will be printed as an appendix to this bill.

The people of the state of Wisconsin, represented in senate and assembly, do enact as follows:

- **SECTION 1.** 81.15 of the statutes is repealed.
- 2 **Section 2.** 81.17 of the statutes is repealed.
- 3 **Section 3. Initial applicability.**
- 4 (1) The treatment of sections 81.15 and 81.17 of the statutes first applies to actions arising on the effective date of this subsection.

6 (END)