

## **NOTICE OF PROPOSED GUIDANCE DOCUMENT**

Connector October 2017 newsletter

Pursuant to Wis. Stat. s. 227.112, the Wisconsin Department of Transportation is hereby seeking comment on Connector October 2017 newsletter [Wis. Stat. Ch. 346], a proposed guidance document.

### **PUBLIC COMMENTS AND DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION**

Comments may be submitted to the Wisconsin Department of Transportation for 21 days by:

1. Department's website: <https://appengine.egov.com/apps/wi/dot/guidance-docs?guidDocId=OPA158>

2. Mailing written comments to:  
Office of Public Affairs  
Wisconsin Department of Transportation  
4822 Madison Yards Way  
PO Box 7910  
Madison, WI 53707-7910

### **WEBSITE LOCATION OF FINAL GUIDANCE DOCUMENT**

The final version of this guidance document will be posted at [wisconsin.dot.gov](http://wisconsin.dot.gov) to allow for ongoing comment.

### **AGENCY CONTACT**

DOTOPAGuidanceDocs@DOT.WI.GOV



## State of Wisconsin Department of Transportation

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# Connector newsletter - October 2017

[Connector newsletters](#)

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[Law of the month](#)

[Media contacts](#)

[Events](#)

## The Connector

- Top technology at new Sparta SWEF keeps commercial truck traffic moving safely
- Three-decade old partnership helps to maintain clean, inviting rest areas
- Motor carrier committee discusses truck parking detection, 511 Wisconsin features
- Adopt-A-Highway program builds personal responsibility, community vitality
- Teen Driver Safety Week is opportunity to open door to discussion that can save lives
- Drive right, pass left rule helps keep motorists safe on Wisconsin highways
- Harvest season is time for drivers to practice patience, share roads with farmers

### **Top technology at new Sparta SWEF keeps commercial truck traffic moving safely**

Joe Starr, Wisconsin DOT — Oct. 27

A ribbon-cutting ceremony was held on Oct. 27 for a recently opened [Safety and Weight Enforcement](#)

## Facility along eastbound I-90 near mile-marker 22 by Sparta, Wis.

The Sparta SWEF is well positioned to help [Wisconsin State Patrol](#) keep drivers safe and commercial motor vehicle operators moving along this vital highway corridor. Situated on a slight plateau, the new SWEF has a 270-degree view of the highway, ramps and adjacent truck parking facilities.

"With one head-turn you can see just about everything you need to," says State Patrol Sergeant Nic Betts, explaining how the SWEF's elevated position allows [State Patrol inspectors](#) a clear view of traffic traveling in either direction



along the stretch of I-90 between La Crosse and Tomah. It also allows a clear line-of-sight of truck drivers approaching the SWEF as well as the facility's 30 commercial motor vehicle parking stalls.

The Sparta SWEF is part of a new breed of SWEFs, equipped to conduct essential [motor carrier enforcement](#) duties with the latest automated technology to spot and stop potential violators while allowing those in compliance to continue down the road. Wisconsin DOT's vision is to bring all its SWEFs to the level of those in Sparta, Superior, Beloit and Kenosha. The goal being to have five major SWEFs at the state's five main points of entry. Currently, about 2,800 commercial trucks pass the Sparta SWEF on a typical day, and Federal Highway Administration officials estimate that number will grow to more 4,000 trucks daily by 2027. Furnishing more parking space to accommodate out-of-service trucks while also having the best technology on-hand to ensure safe passage of drivers now and into the future was all taken into account in the Sparta SWEF design.

### WIM scales

Within the Sparta facility's technological arsenal is a fully automated self-calibrating mainline weigh-in-motion scale situated upstream from the SWEF. This is a scale built into the interstate that captures truck weights while they drive. Trucks passing over the WIM scale that fall within weight compliance continue uninterrupted on the mainline interstate, with those registering weights heavier than legal limits being instructed via roadside digital signs to exit the highway at the upcoming SWEF. After exiting the highway, trucks drive over a second scale called a "ramp WIM," which tracks vehicles through the system and takes a more accurate reading of the truck's weight. If the ramp WIM measures the truck weight within legal limits, the driver is instructed to take the bypass lane and reenter the mainline interstate. If the truck still registers as overweight, the driver must stop at the certified static scale for further weight checks and inspection.

A third WIM, or virtual WIM, resides on WIS 16, a bypass route historically used by commercial drivers to avoid the West Salem SWEF, which built in the 1960s was demolished and replaced by the Sparta SWEF. The VWIM works like the mainline interstate WIM – measuring truck weights and delivering an image to an officer's in-car computer.

"With today's technology, all the commercial drivers have apps telling them where all the scales are located," Betts said. "The VWIM allows us to monitor trucks that bypass the SWEF."

### Cameras

High-resolution cameras act as another sorting tool, standing sentry alongside the mainline WIM, and capturing images of license plate and USDOT numbers from passing trucks. These images are shared with a system that tells inspectors who owns the truck and the carrier's safety record.

## Transponders

Truck transponders are a technology many trucking companies have moved to, in lieu of paper documents. The way it works is a motor carrier's credentials are entered in a system which is tied to a transponder in the truck. When the truck passes the transponder reader situated along the highway ahead of the SWEF, it is scanned and – much like the WIM system – the truck either passes through without event or if a safety related or credential issue is detected the truck is flagged and the driver instructed to exit to the SWEF.

## Inside the SWEF

Wisconsin's SWEFs are not only changing technologically but physically and functionally. The facilities themselves have grown, and for good reason as there is plenty of important work happening inside, says Betts.

"There is so much going on beyond the weighing of commercial vehicles, including inspection of the mechanical components and a plethora of equipment in and underneath the vehicles." Inspections extend beyond the vehicles, looking at credentials - registration, proper fuel tax and driver license classes. [Hours of service](#) are reviewed to ensure that drivers are following the number of hours they can drive in a given day.

Wisconsin is also partnering with the [Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration](#) as well as the [Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance](#) to fulfill inspection goals. Everything from walk-arounds to check tires, brakes and other operating equipment to [hazardous material](#) inspections are done when a truck is pulled into the facility.

"We may see an external equipment violation, whether it be a lighting violation or the tire tread looks low," says Betts. "We can pull them around into our indoor bay where we can go under the vehicle and do a full inspection that way."

## Brake testing

Also in Sparta, as well as the Kenosha, Beloit and Superior SWEFs, is a state-of-the art performance based brake testing system. Here each individual truck axle is checked by placing it on a roller that spins the axle. As the rollers start to move, the driver applies the brakes slowly. Once at maximum brake application, the computer tells the driver to release the brake and it measures brake force, giving a brake efficiency percentage for that specific axle.

"We can tell if there is something wrong with brakes before we even go under the truck," said Betts, adding that most brake components now are internal, making the brake testing system a valuable tool.

Another piece of brake-check technology that Sparta hopes to have soon via a grant process is a thermal imaging camera. Betts says this would be helpful in sorting out those trucks in need of a closer look. The thermal imaging camera would scan trucks as they exit to the ramp and alert inspectors if a truck's brakes are not emitting an acceptable amount of heat, if bearings are too hot or if a tire is going flat.

## Focus on education

Once a driver enters the SWEF, inspectors conduct the needed inspections while also helping drivers with questions they have about the process. Educating drivers is a primary focus for inspectors, says Betts.

"We understand that there are a lot of regulations, but we want to make sure that they understand what is expected of them as far as the regulations go." Education and outreach are a big part of daily duties at all of Wisconsin's 13 SWEFs, and when drivers come into a facility there is an abundance of brochures on commercial vehicle compliance.

"If they don't want to read a brochure we are more than happy to talk to them," says Betts. "We are there to give them a better understanding of what the regulations are for the specific type of commodity they are hauling."

### 'Safe haven'

Drivers who are pulled out of service for any number of reasons find welcoming accommodations at the Sparta facility.

"It's a safe haven," says Betts. With a shortage of truck parking nationwide, he says it's important to have adequate parking ready to welcome drivers in need of rest. The facility also has a 24-hour lobby with vending machines and restrooms.

Due to its central location between Tomah and La Crosse, the Sparta SWEF doubles as an emergency command center. The facility also houses a classroom primarily used by cadets from the nearby [Wisconsin State Patrol Academy](#) at Fort McCoy.

"It's a unique setup," says Betts. "You have the classroom kind of segregated to itself but 50 steps down the hallway they can take what they learned in the classroom and get that hands-on training."

[Return to top](#)

---

## Three-decade old partnership helps to maintain clean, inviting rest areas

[Martha Morganstein](#), Wisconsin DOT — Oct. 27

More than 17 million visitors stop at Wisconsin's [highway rest areas](#) every year.

Rest areas are an important part of our infrastructure, providing safe haven from the elements and crucial opportunity for respite among weary travelers.

From Kenosha to Superior and many points between, motorists and commercial drivers have long been satisfied with the quality of the facilities. In fact, a recent survey revealed that more than 95 percent of respondents reported cleanliness as "excellent" or "good."

To keep this level of service, Wisconsin benefits from a unique partnership with 23 community vocational rehabilitation programs throughout the state that provide job opportunities to about 350 workers with disabilities. The Rest Area Maintenance (RAM) program began in 1987. It's now [celebrating its 30th anniversary](#).

During a recent visit to [Rest Area 10](#) in Mauston, Lt. Gov. Rebecca Kleefisch thanked employees for their hard work. Kleefisch also invited employees to the state Capitol in Madison for an event in October in recognition of National Disability Employment Awareness Month.

"The satisfaction rate is possible because of



Wisconsin Lieutenant Governor Rebecca Kleefisch presents a Certificate of Commendation with Wisconsin DOT Deputy Secretary Bob Seitz and a handful of rest area maintenance workers.

everything you are doing here," Kleefisch told workers. "These facilities are about rolling out the red carpet and you are making our state look great for visitors."

Wisconsin's 30 rest areas are located along the interstates and major four-lane highways. The facilities include a variety of amenities such as restrooms, picnic areas, vending services and traveler information.

Different teams work together to ensure that every rest area is top quality and continues to be rated high in customer satisfaction. Local Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRP), contracted through the Rest Area Maintenance (RAM) program in the Wisconsin DOT, provide the day-to-day upkeep duties at each of the rest areas.

Rehabilitation for Wisconsin (RFW), also contracted through RAM, is responsible for managing the CRP employees at each rest area. The non-profit organization does frequent inspections, composes improvement plans and holds training sessions for the CRP employees.

"RAM could not exist without the hard work of the CRPs and RFW," said Wisconsin DOT Roadside Facilities Engineer Tom VanBeek.

Tom Packard, RFW RAM operations director, explained that the skills and independence gained at the RAM program sites have allowed many CRP employees to "blossom in the community." In 2016, 33 individuals moved on to outside employment opportunities such as service jobs or private janitorial jobs.

"The RAM program acts as a stepping-stone for many of these employees," he says. "But many also do end up staying at the RAM program sites because they love it so much."

George Schultz and Steve Hansen, two CRP employees who have worked at Rest Area 10 for the past 30 years, explain they appreciate the variety of the duties offered at the rest area. Some days they may perform landscape maintenance services and operate machinery while other days they may provide indoor custodial care.

The RAM program not only benefits many citizens with disabilities who might otherwise have limited employment opportunities, but Packard emphasizes that the entire state also benefits from the program.

"The state of Wisconsin is a winner because they not only receive good service, but the program is also economically beneficial and leaves everyone satisfied," he said.

[Return to top](#)

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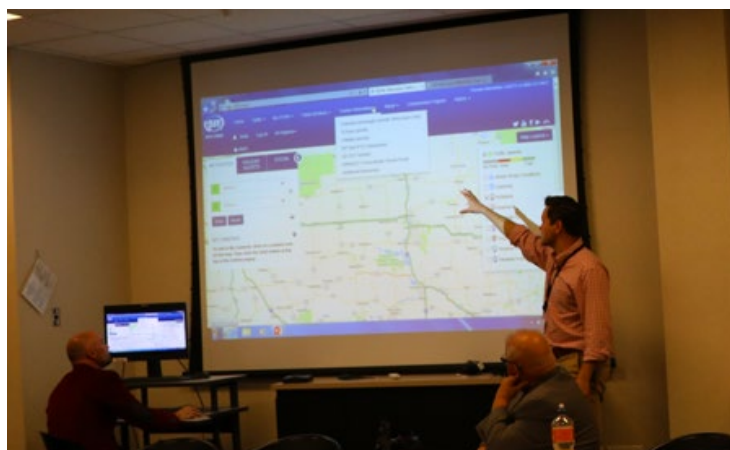
## **Motor carrier committee discusses truck parking detection, 511 Wisconsin features**

## Wisconsin DOT — Oct. 26

Progress in the state's truck parking detection system and a presentation of helpful features for truck drivers on the [511 Wisconsin website](#) were at the top of the agenda of the Motor Carrier Advisory Committee's Oct. 17 meeting at the [State Traffic Operations Center](#) in Milwaukee.

About two dozen committee members, from the department, motor carrier trade groups, private trucking firms and trucker service providers, turned out for the meeting.

Traffic Management Engineer Randy Hoyt, kicked off presentations with an update on the multi-state Truck Parking Information Management Systems project. Two new truck parking detection systems, he explained, are slated for installation at I-39/90 rest areas near Beloit and Janesville. The system monitors rest area parking stalls using sensors and cameras. It then shares stall availability with commercial truck drivers in real-time through dynamic roadside signs. This new technology enhances safety and efficiency by helping commercial truck drivers better plan rest periods without having to exit the freeway, and spend time and fuel looking for appropriate space.



Brian DeNeve and Paul Keltner team up to demonstrate how 511WI can help freight move more efficiently and safely across our state's highway network.

Discussion continued with a presentation on the 511 Wisconsin website. Traffic Management Unit Supervisor Paul Keltner and Public Information Manager Brian DeNeve shared features of interest to truckers such as signing up to receive incident alerts to their email or mobile device, along with route planning options. Questions were fielded regarding the [511 Construction Projects webpages](#), which provide information about specific project areas. There was also discussion of availability of 511 resources in other states. While not all states have a statewide 511 network, some states like Illinois have expressed interest in learning more about the Wisconsin system.

A tour of the STOC Control Room followed the meeting, giving committee members a first-hand look at this operation, which provides reliable, predictable and safe movement of people and freight throughout Wisconsin, and the Great Lakes regional highway network.

[Return to top](#)

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## Program puts trash in its place, builds personal responsibility, community vitality

### State's 2,864 Adopt-A-Highway groups bagged 180 tons of trash last year

Joe Starr, Wisconsin DOT — Oct. 23

Wisconsin's highways are gateways to the state's cities, villages and towns, making

them the first thing motorists see as they enter these communities.

That first impression has impact and can help build positive perceptions and attitudes, which is why [Adopt-A-Highway](#) is such an important program for fostering these endeavors.



Wisconsin Adopt-A-Highway

Coordinator Christa Schaefer says the program's intent when launched more than 25 years ago was to reduce litter pickup costs, but other benefits were soon realized as surrounding communities began reaping its rewards.

"There have been studies and research that show if your community is neat and clean, the people who live there are going to take more ownership," says Schaefer. The "[Broken Window Theory](#)" illustrates this point, using the example of a single broken window as a visual cue for diminished social control that attracts vandalism, loitering and other criminal acts. By fixing the broken window—or in this case picking up roadside litter—the negative visual cue is removed and potential for criminal acts curbed.

Adopt-A-Highway acts as a first line of defense by turning blight to beauty through the simple yet powerful act of removing roadside trash, says Schaefer, adding that such improvements can build pride among residents and visitors alike, leading to cleaner communities that attract people and businesses.

The Adopt-A-Highway program was started by the Texas DOT in 1984. The idea was soon adopted by civic groups and spread from there nationally and internationally. Wisconsin's Adopt-A-Highway program launched in 1991, along with 42 other states.

Groups since have joined Adopt-A-Highway for myriad reasons. Volunteer groups vary widely from businesses, churches and organizations to family, friends or any group that decides they want to give back.

"Wisconsin's Adopt-A-Highway volunteers provide a tremendous service to taxpayers by helping keep our roadsides looking attractive for both state residents and tourists," said Wisconsin DOT Secretary Dave Ross.

Of the 11,800 miles of state highway in Wisconsin, nearly 4,000 miles are still available for adoption, meaning there is [plenty of room for interested volunteers](#). Last year, Wisconsin's 2,864 Adopt-A-Highway groups collected and bagged 180 tons of trash and recyclables, which were gathered by county highway crews for disposal.

Economic benefits are seen on the front end as these groups volunteer their time to pick up the refuse often lost from [unsecured loads](#) or passing motorists, with plenty more pluses coming from this clean-roads initiative.

## Learning what clean means



Education is another benefit to come from this program and its impact is far reaching. As a parent, Schaefer says she sees the program as a teaching tool for young people.

"It's important for kids to realize when they throw their trash on the floor or outside, someone needs to pick it up or it just sits there. It teaches them how to respect our community by putting trash away where it should be put away. Or if you find something on the ground that shouldn't be there—even if you didn't put it there—pick it up."

Adopt-A-Highway allows young people to see first-hand the level of trash that can collect in one location as they pick it up throughout the year. And that experience extends to motorists who are passing by seeing these volunteers, possibly thinking before deciding to toss waste out their windows.

"It's also keeping them attuned to the fact that there are volunteers out there while they're driving and being sensitive to that fact," says Schaefer, adding that motorists are always asked to be alert, slow down and [move over](#) when they see anyone on the roadside, whether it be an Adopt-A-Highway crew, law enforcement, emergency responders or maintenance workers.

## Healthy vegetation

Maintaining healthy roadside vegetation is another byproduct coming from this program. Plants and trees can grow more freely when unencumbered by trash. Root systems help to keep soil in place and curb erosion that can compromise roadway substructures.

## Get involved

Adopt-A-Highway signs not only indicate a road section is being maintained but they promote this worthwhile program and the gracious groups giving their time.

"Even if they don't see the group they see the Adopt-A-Highway signs so people can question, 'I wonder what that is?'," says Schaefer. "And when they are home they Google Adopt-a-Highway and learn more about the program."

The program does everything it can to place volunteer groups within their desired areas. Schaefer says they always try to match up the group with a stretch that works best for them, but if the area they desire is full they recommend the next closest segment. And if there's no segments within the range that works for the group, Schaefer says another option is to refer them to a municipal or other group offering similar programs that will allow them to stay engaged.

Wisconsin DOT furnishes safety vests, highway worker signs, a [safety training video](#), trash bags and two permanent signs identifying the group. Each group must provide one adult supervisor for every five or six volunteers. Groups do not work in dangerous areas like medians, bridges or steep slopes.

[Visit the Adopt-A-Highway page](#) to learn more about the program and become a volunteer.

[Return to top](#)

---

## Teen Driver Safety Week is opportunity to open door to discussion that can save lives

Joe Starr, Wisconsin DOT — Oct. 17

A carload of teens out for a late afternoon drive in rural Wisconsin in early 2016 was cut short when the driver lost control of the vehicle on a curve, leaving the road and hitting a culvert before slamming into a tree.

The 18-year-old driver was severely injured and trapped in the vehicle. Two of the

passengers were also injured and the third was killed.

This is one of many tragic stories of teen-driver involved crashes happening on Wisconsin roads - the repercussions of which forever changing lives of people in the communities where the young people live, the schools they attend and especially their friends and families.

Last year, 5,175 teenagers were injured and 46 killed in vehicle crashes on Wisconsin roads. [National Teen Driver Safety Week](#) - October 15-21 - is a time to raise awareness about the factors that contribute to teen driver crashes and what can be done to prevent them.

The crash report taken by police at the scene of that fatal crash was like many other crash reports involving teen drivers in that the "Driver Factors" - which lists the circumstances leading up to the crash - were similar. This crash report said the driver was "exceeding speed limit, speed too fast for conditions, inattentive driving, failure to have control."

These factors - in addition to "driver condition," which in most cases means the driver was impaired by a substance - regularly appear on teen driver crash reports, and what it often comes down to, says Wisconsin DOT's Bureau of Transportation Safety Director David Pabst, is driver inexperience.

"Teens tend to speed, drive aggressively and not buckle up," Pabst says. "In addition, teens are prone to distracted driving."

Distracted driving is one of the most common contributors to teen driver crashes, and Wisconsin state law prohibits drivers with an instruction permit or probationary license, which includes many teenagers, from using a cell phone while driving, except to report an emergency. Another state law prohibits texting while driving for all motorists.

Despite these laws, Pabst says too many teens still [talk or text on mobile devices](#) when all their attention should be focused on driving.

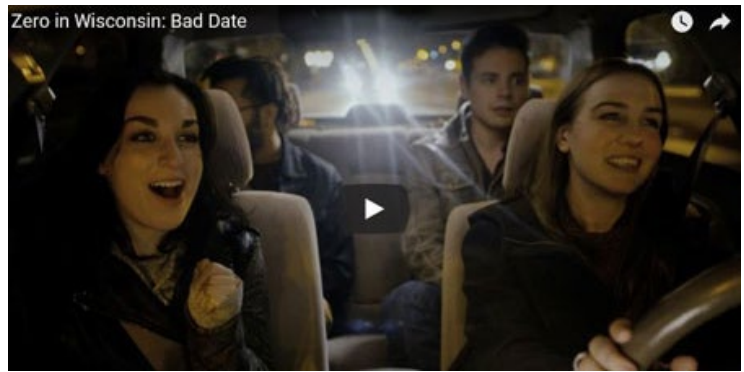
Passengers are another factor and traffic safety officials stress that the risk of a crash increases significantly when teen drivers have teen passengers in their vehicle.

"Inexperienced teen drivers can be easily distracted by their teenaged passengers," Pabst says. Wisconsin has a graduated driver license requirement for new drivers younger than age 18 that helps them gain valuable experience behind the wheel while limiting the number of teen passengers in their vehicles."

Further help is found at Wisconsin DOT's [Teen Driver Portal](#), with plenty of resources for teenagers and their parents to navigate this significant life-transition.

Parents have a critical role in helping their teens develop safety-conscious driving habits. Wisconsin DOT offers the [Wisconsin Parent's Supervised Driving Guide](#) to help teens become safe, smart and skilled drivers.

"We can give them the educational tools to teach them what the right decisions are," says Pabst. "But it's up to each and every teenager to make that promise to their friends, their family and themselves that they will commit to the practice of safe driving whenever they get behind the wheel."



A Zero in Wisconsin ad titled Bad Date depicted the dangers of not wearing a seatbelt. [According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), compared with other age groups, teens have among the lowest rates of seat belt use. In 2015, only 61 percent of high school students reported they always wear seat belts when riding with someone else.

[Return to top](#)

---

## Drive right, pass left rule helps keep motorists safe on Wisconsin highways

Joe Starr, Wisconsin DOT — Oct. 10

Is driving in the left lane of a Wisconsin highway at a speed slower than that of surrounding traffic illegal?

If you are traveling at the “legal” speed of traffic the answer is no, but whether it's the right thing to do depends.



There is no law in Wisconsin that says you can't travel in the left lane, as long as you are moving along at the speed limit, says Wisconsin State Patrol Inspector Tom Tweedy.

[Wisconsin state statute 346.59\(1\)](#) says: “No person shall drive a motor vehicle at a speed so slow as to impede the normal and reasonable movement of traffic except when reduced speed is necessary for safe operation or is

necessary to comply with the law.”

If that language sounds a bit broad, it's because it covers a complicated topic with many potential variables, depending on the highway layout, traffic volume, and the behavior of individual drivers.

### Slower traffic right is safe move

So, driving in the left lane as long as you are doing the speed limit is legal, but is it right thing to do? Tweedy says in most cases, no.

“The primary problem is that it can cause traffic issues since not everyone is traveling at the speed limit.” For example, a left-lane driver may come up behind another driver in that lane and want to pass. It's a two-lane highway and there is another vehicle traveling in the right lane beside the slower left-lane driver. As the cars continue side-by-side more vehicles continue to line up behind in the left lane, which can lead to issues.

Even if the faster moving vehicles are exceeding the posted speed limit, Tweedy says the prudent move is for that slower moving driver to move right and allow faster traffic to pass on the left.

“This is not saying that exceeding the speed limit is okay,” says Tweedy. “They shouldn't be doing that in the first place, but if you do encounter someone moving at a higher speed the safe approach is to move right and allow them to pass.”

Traffic flow is more efficient when slower drivers move to the rightmost lane allowing those driving faster to pass on the left. Problems occur when a slower driver remains in the left lane impeding traffic flow and leaving faster drivers to take other measures.

Drivers who want to travel faster may become frustrated. This can lead to aggressive driving behavior like following the slower driver too close. [Tailgating is dangerous](#) and violators can receive

citations or, even worse, end up causing a crash and injuring themselves or others. Faster drivers may also pass on the right of slower left-lane drivers which, while legal, is unorthodox and can catch nearby drivers by surprise, possibly leading to other traffic incidents.

## Practice patience

In some cases slower drivers don't even realize they are in the left lane. Maybe they've passed several cars and they continue to creep past other slower moving vehicles not realizing that there is a line of cars behind wishing to pass them. In these cases, a combination of courtesy and patience works. Courtesy from that slower left-lane driver moving to the right lane to allow faster traffic to pass and patience on the part of that faster moving traffic coming from behind.

"Give them time to react to whatever it is that they're dealing with," says Tweedy. There may be an incident up ahead that they are trying to navigate. Or maybe they are passing that slower right-lane traffic and just need another minute to complete the pass so they can safely move right."

The best way to manage in these circumstances—as is the case with any driving—is through good judgment. Minimize impulse, be patient, allow extra time and distance, and remain aware of what is happening around you and especially what is coming ahead.

"We want people to err on the side of caution," says Tweedy. "Unless there is reason to be in that left lane, slower drivers should be in the right lane so faster traffic can pass on the left. And if you are driving faster and come upon a slower left lane driver be patient and avoid aggressive driving." Abrupt lane changes, Tweedy says, can cause other drivers to tap their brakes, which creates an "accordion effect." This is where traffic progressively comes to a sudden stop and if drivers are not watching far enough ahead and anticipating the slowdown crashes can occur.

## Exceptions to the rule

While the rule is slower traffic drive right, there are cases where traveling slower than the speed limit in the left lane is okay. If a driver sees something in the lane ahead—a tire or other debris—they may need to change lanes to avoid hitting the object.

"The driver may see there is something up ahead in their lane and move to the left lane, but once they come closer realize it wasn't a real hazard after all," says Tweedy. "This might slow left lane traffic temporarily, but it's better to do this than staying in that lane and making a quick judgment when they get up to that item."

A slower driver may also be in the left lane because an emergency vehicle is up ahead on the right shoulder, and the "[Move Over Law](#)" says drivers must provide a safety zone for stopped law enforcement, emergency and maintenance vehicles.

There are also cases where drivers aren't comfortable travelling at highway speeds but for some reason prefer to drive in the left lane, says Tweedy.

"Sometimes we need to explain to those drivers that if you are uncomfortable traveling in the left lane or if these speeds are too fast for you maybe there is a different route you should be taking that has a speed at 55 or slower."

## Urban travel

Following "drive right, pass left" is especially important in urban areas as traffic and intricate highway systems make even the most basic travel tasks more complex. Issues are most common during heavy traffic in early morning and afternoon commutes.

"You have people trying to get to work, some of which are driving above the speed limit," says Tweedy. This, coupled with complex highway systems with entrance and exit ramps on either side, means that slower drivers may have to be in that left lane so they can make their exit. The many scenarios encountered on any given trip require drivers to use their best judgment during highway travel.

"It really depends on the traffic," says Tweedy. "Drivers should take in what they have around them. If their regular commute involves heavy traffic and getting over to the left-hand exit ramp is a challenge they're going to recognize that and say 'I'm going to get in that left lane earlier so that I make sure that I make my exit.'" In turn, other drivers should be aware of their surroundings and understand that there will be situations where a fellow driver may need to get over into their lane because an exit they need to take is coming up.

Patience and courtesy become increasingly important when multiple variables are in play. In these situations, it helps to remember what we learned as children, says Tweedy.

"Our teachers and parents taught us to share and that applies to us as drivers. Everybody has that right to be out in traffic and using that road just as we are. By following the rules and respecting everyone's right to be there, we increase safety and decrease opportunity for incidents. It's a win-win."

[Return to top](#)

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## Harvest season is time for drivers to practice patience, share roads with farmers

Wisconsin DOT — Oct. 4



Tractors silhouetted along a ridge near Kekoskee, Wis. Photo courtesy of Sharon Walk.

Wisconsin is home to 68,700 farms totaling more than 14.4 million acres. Nearly 12 percent of the state's employment is related to agriculture, a major economic driver creating \$88.3 billion in annual impact.

Those are just a few reasons why, especially throughout the fall harvest, drivers might see additional heavy machinery on the roads.

It's important for drivers to remain patient and plan ahead. Tractors and other large farm equipment often move slower than posted speed limits and their nontraditional roadway entrance and exit points to and from adjacent farmland can come unexpectedly.

**Driver should slow down** immediately whenever they see the fluorescent orange slow-moving vehicle emblem on the rear of a tractor or other piece of equipment.

- Watch for any debris that may fall from trucks
- Assume equipment operators cannot see you
- Don't drive distracted. Even at a reduced speed, it is dangerous to take attention from the road.

**A recent Wisconsin law change** makes it illegal for motorists to pass slow moving agricultural equipment in a no passing zone.

- Pass machinery only in passing zones when it is safe to do so.
- Do not pass on the shoulder.

Farmers are asked to review lighting and marking requirements as well as local weight restrictions. WisDOT publishes information on its [agricultural equipment and vehicles page](#).

[Return to top](#)

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