

## Chapter Trans 209

### HIGHWAY AND BRIDGE PROJECT SELECTION PROCESS

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**Trans 209.01 Purpose.** In accordance with s. 85.025, Stats., this rule sets forth the process and criteria used by the department of transportation for evaluating and selecting state trunk highway and bridge improvement (construction) projects.

**History:** Cr. Register, September, 1981, No. 309, eff. 10–1–81.

**Trans 209.02 Applicability.** The procedures in this rule are to be applied so as to avoid conflict with the special statutory obligations of the department to comply with criteria and standards of federal agencies for obtaining and using federal funds (ss. 84.015, 84.03, Stats.).

**History:** Cr. Register, September, 1981, No. 309, eff. 10–1–81.

**Trans 209.03 Definitions.** (1) “Central office” means the transportation administrative office located in Madison.

(2) “Deficiency” means a less than standard condition in one or more of a number of highway or bridge physical or operating conditions or characteristics.

(3) “Department” means the Wisconsin department of transportation.

(4) “Federal aid” means the aids that the federal government makes available to Wisconsin for highways.

(5) “Geometrics” means the horizontal (width, curvature) and vertical (grade) design elements of highway and bridge facilities.

(6) “Improvement level” means the type of construction improvement. It can range from resurfacing to complete reconstruction of a highway and either rehabilitation or replacement for bridges.

(a) “Resurfacing” means placing a new surface on existing roadway to provide a better all weather surface, a better riding surface, and to extend or renew the pavement life. It generally involves no improvement in capacity or geometrics. Resurfacing may include some elimination or shielding of roadside obstacles, culvert replacements, signals, marking, signing and intersection improvements. Usually no additional right-of-way is required; except possible minor acquisition for drainage and intersection improvements.

(b) “Recondition” means work in addition to resurfacing. Minor reconditioning includes pavement widening and shoulder paving. Major reconditioning includes improvement of an isolated grade, curve, intersection or sight distance problem to improve safety. Major recondition projects may require additional right-of-way.

(c) “Reconstruction” means total rebuilding of an existing highway to improve maintainability, safety, geometrics and traffic service. It is accomplished basically on existing alignment, and major elements may include flattening of hills and grades, improvement of curves, widening of the roadbed, and elimination or shielding of roadside obstacles. Normally reconstruction will require additional right-of-way.

(d) “Bridge rehabilitation” means the preservation or restoration of the structural integrity of an existing bridge as well as work to correct safety defects.

(e) “Bridge replacement” means the building of a new bridge to replace an existing bridge.

(7) “Interstate project” means projects constructed on an interstate designated highway.

(8) “Major project” means projects that result in new or significantly altered highways. Such projects typically involve the continuous relocation of a highway segment 2.5 miles or more in length; the addition of traffic lanes 2.5 miles or more in length; or unusually high cost.

(9) “Pavement serviceability index” (PSI) means a numerical measure of the quality of a car ride on a given pavement as determined by an electro/mechanical instrument. It ranges from poor (0–1) to excellent (4–5).

(10) “Policy planning” means the analysis of the many issues that may affect the State’s transportation system and the development of the department’s policies in regard to those issues.

(11) “Program” means a multi-year schedule of proposed projects.

(12) “Programming process” means the detailed assessment of specific policy and program choices necessary to develop a program.

(13) “Project” means a proposed improvement to a segment of a state trunk highway or a bridge.

(14) “Project alternatives” means the varying improvement levels that are identified as relevant for a project.

(15) “Project development” means the process from inception of a project to the contracting for construction of the project. It includes data collection, deficiency analysis, surveys, design, preparation of plans and contract documents and right-of-way acquisition.

(16) “Secretary” means the secretary of the department of transportation.

(17) “System planning” means system-wide analysis of highway facilities and assessment of system deficiencies and potential improvements in light of a range of assumptions about the future.

(18) “Transportation region office” means one of the departmental administrative offices under the division of transportation system development located throughout the state.

**History:** Cr. Register, September, 1981, No. 308, eff. 10–1–81; **correction in** (18) **made under s. 13.92 (4) (b) 6., Stats., Register February 2013 No. 686.**

**Trans 209.04 Policy goals.** (1) The overall goal for the department shall be to address highway transportation needs as efficiently as possible to achieve optimum utilization of available funds. This shall be accomplished by:

(a) Maximizing the use of existing highways and bridges and thus minimizing the need for new highways and facilities.

(b) Utilizing a highway’s surface life before improving the facility, where practical.

(c) Determining the appropriate level of improvement to achieve optimum effectiveness from the highway system.

(d) Emphasizing the correction of safety-deficient segments of the highway system.

(e) Seeking to resolve facility-related problems that inhibit economic vitality and growth.

(f) Encouraging the staging of improvement projects to minimize the initial investments required while maintaining flexibility to meet longer range needs at a later date.

(g) Utilizing federal aids to the greatest extent reasonable.

(h) Minimizing negative effects on the surrounding communities and on the natural environment.

**History:** Cr. Register, September, 1981, No. 308, eff. 10-1-81.

**Trans 209.05 Process objectives. (1)** The department shall perform project evaluation and selection as a necessary component of its programming process in the following general areas: bridge projects, 3R (resurfacing, recondition and reconstruction) highway projects, interstate projects, and major projects. The objectives of the programming process shall be to:

(a) Provide policy and program choices for the department by evaluating and comparing the benefits and costs of various alternatives for preserving, rehabilitating and improving the highway system.

(b) Furnish information to assess whether available revenues can provide adequate highway and bridge facilities over the long term.

(c) Define a specific program as a target for departmental efforts that ensures efficient use of staff and funds and which accounts for the lead times involved in project development.

(d) Ensure that investment decisions are consistent with statewide objectives by developing systematic criteria and procedures for identifying deficiencies, developing proposed solutions, and selecting projects.

(e) Facilitate the implementation of the department's policy and system plans.

(f) Inform the public of the department's intentions and provide an opportunity for public review and comment.

(g) Provide a basis for coordinating the department's efforts with the planning, programming and budget activities of other state, national, regional, and local agencies.

**History:** Cr. Register, September, 1981, No. 309, eff. 10-1-81.

**Trans 209.06 Programming guidelines. (1)** The department shall develop a program within estimated levels of revenue for a prescribed time period as part of a four level decision-making process that includes broad policy planning, system planning, programming and project development (Figure 1).

**(2)** The programming process shall define a means of project evaluation and selection utilizing the following basic guidelines where appropriate:

(a) Considering alternative program levels to illustrate the cost impacts and benefits of varying program levels.

(b) Utilizing indicators that measure deficiencies to identify candidate improvement projects and the appropriate level of improvement, considering the variation in fund availability.

(c) Achieving adequate surface renewal projects to preserve the overall system serviceability and rideability. The level of surface renewal mileage is defined through analysis of the pavement serviceability index and pavement age.

(d) Replacing or rehabilitating deficient bridges by considering load carrying capacity, physical condition and restrictive or dangerous widths, clearances or approach roadways and coordination with other programmed work.

(e) Distributing funds equitably statewide.

(f) Considering major projects where benefit/cost analysis is favorable, where there is the possibility of significant social and

economic benefits and where there is a high degree of public support and acceptability.

**History:** Cr. Register, September, 1981, No. 309, eff. 10-1-81.

**Trans 209.07 Candidate project identification process. (1) GENERAL DESCRIPTION.** Candidate project identification is accomplished within the overall framework of developing the highway and bridge improvement program. The department shall identify both the surface, structure, safety, geometric or capacity deficiencies, singly or in combination, and the alternative improvement levels to correct or reduce the deficiencies.

**(2) RESPONSIBILITIES.** The transportation region offices, with the guidance from the central office, shall take the lead role in identifying candidate projects for the resurfacing, reconditioning, reconstruction, interstate, major and bridge program areas. The regions shall provide the regional and local viewpoints and knowledge of unique local conditions to program development.

**(3) COLLECT AND DEVELOP DATA.** The department shall maintain a system of uniform data collection for segments of the highway system. This data shall be used for comparison and evaluation purposes to assist in determining that the most appropriate and beneficial candidate projects and improvement levels are selected. This data shall be updated, as necessary, for the recycling of the program. The following data will be collected and developed where appropriate:

(a) Highway data

1. Pavement surface type  
2. Year surfaced  
3. Widths: right of way, travel lane, pavement, shoulders, median, and parking lane

4. Lanes: travel and parking

5. Driveways

6. Posted speed

7. Pavement serviceability index (PSI)

8. Accident information

9. Curves with limited stopping sight distance

10. Steep grades

11. Percent no passing zone

12. Average daily traffic

13. Forecast average daily traffic

14. Hourly vehicle data and hourly capacity

15. Parking restrictions

16. Terrain

17. Access control

18. Maintenance problems

(b) Bridge data

1. Deck condition: expansion and construction joints

2. Superstructure: main load carrying members, floor system

3. Substructure condition: abutments, piers, bents

4. Waterway condition: adequacy of opening, flooding, debris present

5. Approaches condition: roadway condition, horizontal and vertical sight distance

6. Capacity condition: design, inventory and operating load, posting, maximum vehicle weight, load rating basis, overburden depth

7. Field inspection and office appraisal rating

(c) Historically collected environmental, social and economic data

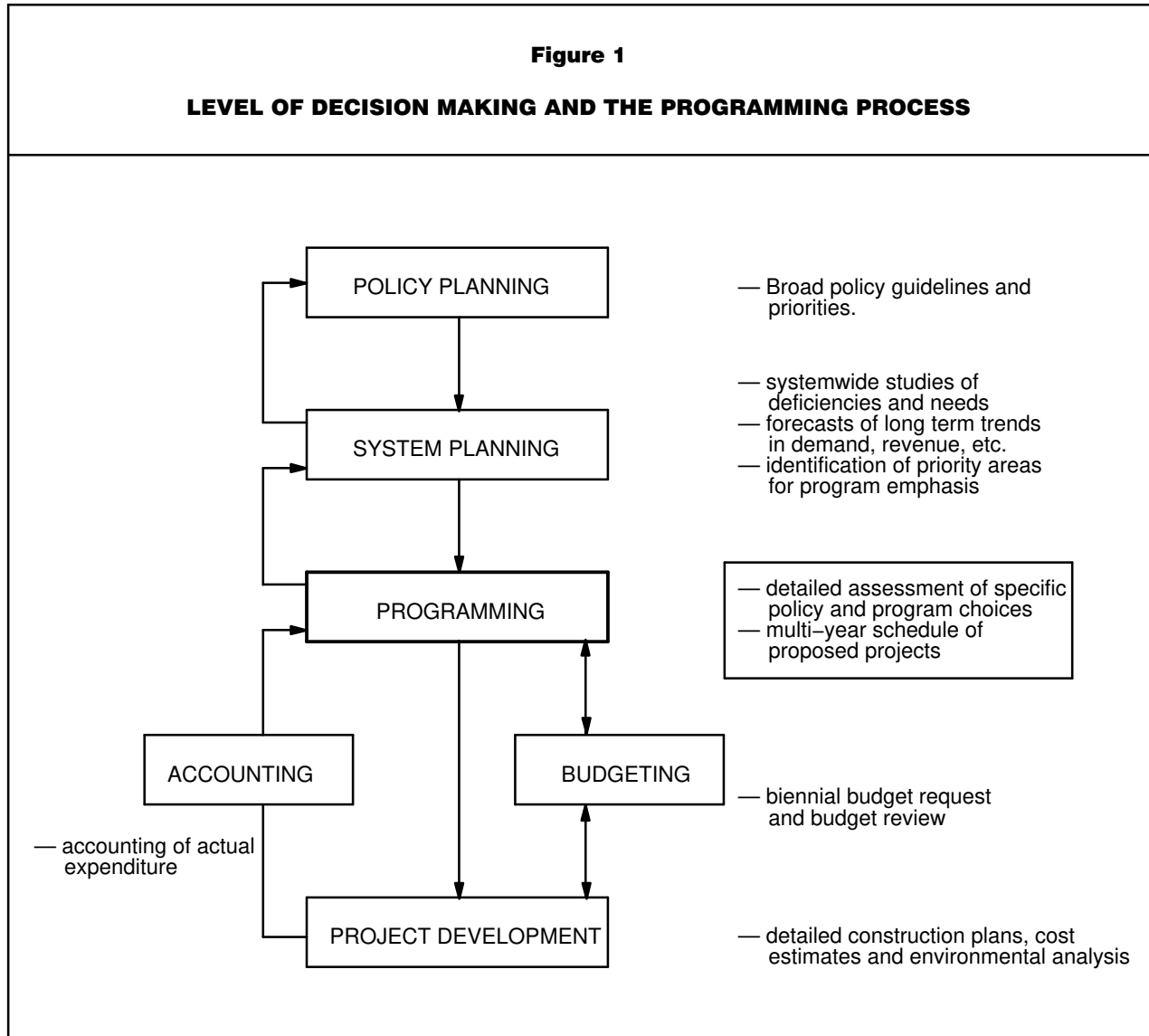
1. Land use

2. Right-of-way required

3. Housing and business units required

4. Farms affected

5. Land required: agricultural, wetland and upland habitat



- 6. Habitat replaced
- 7. Endangered species
- 8. Air quality effects
- 9. Noise level impacts
- 10. Energy consumption

**(4) IDENTIFY CANDIDATE PROJECTS.** Candidate projects may originate from the following sources:

- (a) Segments which have one or more deficiencies based on the analyses of the data collected and developed.
- (b) Projects considered or included in the last programming cycle.
- (c) Projects which address problem areas identified by departmental staff.
- (d) Projects recommended by elected officials, citizens, local units of governments, regional planning commissions, county highway committees, county traffic safety commissions, etc.
- (e) Projects coordinated with planned development.
- (f) Projects that must be coordinated with other projects.
- (g) Projects identified as a part of the interstate cost estimate.
- (h) Projects which constitute a gap in an existing system.

(i) Projects in high priority corridors with large past investment.

(j) Projects that are eligible for special discretionary federal funding.

(k) Projects that are compatible with and serve to implement state or local transportation plans.

**(5) PROJECT DEFICIENCY ANALYSIS.** Candidate projects shall be analyzed at the transportation region office for resurfacing, reconditioning and reconstruction projects and at the central office for bridge, interstate and major projects. Primary criteria used to indicate deficiencies on candidate projects are:

(a) Accident rate or occurrence that is greater than the statewide average.

(b) Volume to capacity ratio that is greater than .8 in the 100th hour at level of service "C".

(c) No passing zone that is greater than 50% of the project length.

(d) Pavement serviceability index that is less than 2.5 on the interstate system, less than 2.25 on a road functionally classified principal arterial or less than 2.0 on all other roads.

(e) Pavement age that is more than 20 years on portland cement concrete or more than 15 years on bituminous pavements.

(f) Pavement width that is less than 21 feet.

(g) Shoulder width that is less than 4 feet.

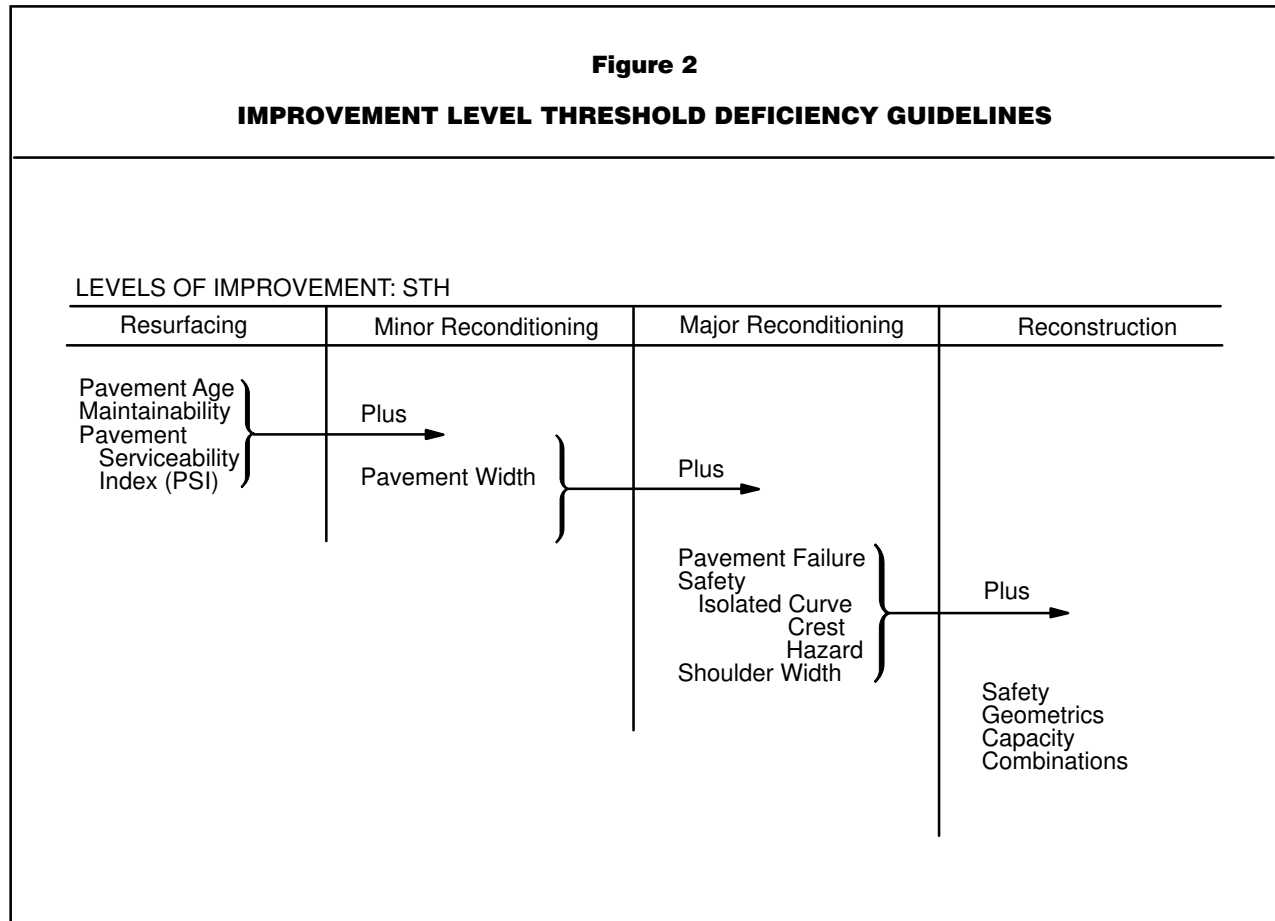
(h) Bridges that have a sufficiency rating less than 50 or have a condition or load rating of 3 (basically intolerable condition requiring high priority of repair).

**(6) DEVELOP ALTERNATIVE PROJECT IMPROVEMENT TYPES AND COST ESTIMATES.** The department shall identify a range of practical improvement types for each candidate project. The range of alternatives for highway projects may include: patching and maintenance resurfacing (the equivalent of the “no build” option); improvement resurfacing; minor and major reconditioning; and reconstruction (See Figure 2). Alternatives for bridges shall be: maintenance; rehabilitation; or replacement.

(a) The department shall consider the following factors for the range of alternative improvement levels of a given project:

1. The nature, number and severity of the deficiencies present;
2. The overall budget available;
3. The cost estimate for each alternative;
4. The associated federal-aid eligibility requirements;
5. The existence of other related projects;
6. The probable project effects concerning safety, energy consumption, economic development and the social and natural environment;
7. The traffic volumes served by the proposed project.

**History:** Cr. Register, September, 1981, No. 309, eff. 10-1-81; **corrections in (2), (5) (intro.) made under s. 13.92 (4) (b) 6., Stats., Register February 2013 No. 686.**



**Trans 209.08 Project evaluation and selection criteria.** The evaluation and selection of projects shall be directed toward preserving, rehabilitating, and improving the physical condition and serviceability of the state trunk highways and bridges. A combination of both quantitative information and professional judgment shall be used to compare the merits of projects and improvement levels to achieve appropriate statewide consistency. Candidate projects shall be initially evaluated at the region level. At this level, projects are analyzed based on an assessment of local conditions and needs in accordance with the region target mileage guideline and the funding allocation. The candidate projects shall be evaluated by the following criteria where appropriate:

**(1)** Accomplishing sufficient surface renewal mileage necessary to preserve system serviceability and rideability. The target

level of mileage renewal is established by the pavement serviceability index, pavement age and engineering field evaluation. The goal is to maintain an overall average pavement serviceability index of 3.0.

**(2)** Limiting the more extensive reconditioning, reconstruction, and new facility development projects to those projects where the number or severity of deficiencies exceed statewide averages for safety, geometry or capacity, or where roadbeds are so deficient structurally that resurfacing or minor reconditioning is not a feasible alternative.

**(3)** Correcting safety problems as defined by accident occurrences and rates exceeding the statewide average or to sites with severe accident potential.

(4) Maximizing the utilization of existing facilities through use of low capital investment projects or transportation system management techniques such as signalization, channelization, access control, park and ride lots, etc.

(5) Selectively rehabilitating or replacing, as appropriate, those bridges:

(a) With posted weight restrictions;

(b) That cannot be effectively maintained, based on the field inspections and office appraisals;

(c) That are functionally obsolete (geometric deficiencies of narrow width, restricted clearance, poor alignment, general safety) or expected to become unsatisfactory in structural or condition rating within the program period.

(6) Considering the project development lead time of 2–10 years and the complexity of the project.

(7) Utilizing the results of benefit/cost analysis or other cost effectiveness techniques to establish funding priorities for safety projects and for evaluating alternatives and relative merits of competing major projects.

(8) Determining the extent of public acceptability or local support through such things as informational hearings, local governmental meetings and correspondence.

(9) Identifying the nature and extent of environmental, energy, social and economic effects on high level recondition and reconstruction projects on an overall basis.

(10) Determining the community effects and benefits including traffic service, safety, air and noise quality and overall community improvement.

(11) Identifying the availability of and eligibility for federal, state and local funding to optimize use of all funds.

(12) Improving system continuity and safety.

(13) Ensuring compatibility with various local, regional and state plans through cooperation with local units of government, county and regional planning and review agencies and other state agencies.

**History:** Cr. Register, September, 1981, No. 309, eff. 10–1–81; **correction in (intro.) made under s. 13.92 (4) (b) 6., Stats., Register February 2013 No. 686.**

**Trans 209.09 Program development and evaluation.** (1) The department shall maintain information on a range of alternative dollar level programs. This information illustrates a range of options and offers the secretary, as well as the governor and the legislature, choices as to the appropriate funding levels for the highway program.

(2) Based on the analysis performed in s. Trans 209.08, the department shall select candidate projects and the appropriate level of improvement. The level of improvement proposed for a candidate project may vary dependent upon the dollar level of the program.

(3) The department shall accomplish both project level and program level evaluations. Evaluations shall assist in the identification of appropriate projects, improvement levels and program dollar levels.

(4) The central office shall review and evaluate the region's program recommendations with several iterations of development and review necessary to produce a single statewide program.

(5) Project level evaluation shall include comparing the extent and severity of deficiencies:

(a) Between projects;

(b) To region and state average for such deficiencies;

(c) To program level average (region and state) for such deficiencies;

(d) And to the proposed improvement level rationale of Figure 2.

(6) The department shall accomplish program level evaluation statewide and between regions by evaluating the:

(a) Extent and severity of project deficiencies corrected;

(b) Changes in accident and system capacity that result;

(c) And the environmental and energy implications of the programs.

(7) The department shall maintain a file of information which specifies the deficiencies of projects analyzed for the program.

**History:** Cr. Register, September, 1981, No. 309, eff. 10–1–81; **corrections in (4), (5) (b), (c), (6) (intro.) made under s. 13.92 (4) (b) 6., Stats., Register February 2013 No. 686.**

**Trans 209.10 Program selection.** The alternative programs and their costs and benefits shall be documented and reviewed by the secretary who shall select a program level and recommend it to the governor. After the enactment of the biennial budget by the legislature and the governor, the program shall be adjusted to be consistent with the approved funding level for the current biennium.

**History:** Cr. Register, September, 1981, No. 309, eff. 10–1–81.

**Trans 209.11 Public review.** (1) The department shall seek public review and comment concerning the program.

(2) Such review shall include an informational presentation of the proposed program of major projects by the department to all transportation related legislative committees at a time mutually agreeable to the department and the committees prior to February 15 of the odd numbered years.

(3) After the enactment of the biennial budget, the department shall make the program document available to interested individuals and organizations and will also inform the general public of this availability. Informational hearings shall be held after the release of the program document at times and locations determined by the secretary and publicized through the local media. These hearings shall serve both to inform the public and to obtain reactions for use in the ongoing program development activities.

(4) The public review of the program shall be supplemented by public reviews of policy and system planning efforts and of individual projects.

**History:** Cr. Register, September, 1981, No. 309, eff. 10–1–81.

**Trans 209.12 Program recycle.** Program development shall be maintained as a continuous process. Upon the completion of one program cycle, a new program development cycle shall begin. Recycling the program normally involves: extending it 2 years; updating data, project alternatives, and project cost estimates; reassessing the underlying policies; and refining methods and procedures.

**History:** Cr. Register, September, 1981, No. 309, eff. 10–1–81.

**Trans 209.13 Program adjustments.** Programs are estimates and are not absolute. Adjustments to the program are necessary due to changes in project design, the time to acquire the right-of-way and obtain the required clearances and completion of the environmental impact statement procedure. These adjustments shall be continual in order to assure the most optimum use of resources. The goal of the adjustments shall be consistent with s. Trans 209.04.

**History:** Cr. Register, September, 1981, No. 309, eff. 10–1–81.