



Legislative Fiscal Bureau

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Joint Committee on Finance

Paper #610

Hoan Bridge Fencing (Transportation - State Highway Program)

[LFB 2021-23 Budget Summary: Page 587, #9]

CURRENT LAW

The Daniel Hoan Memorial Bridge (Hoan Bridge) is a nearly two-mile bridge that connects I-794 in downtown Milwaukee with the lake freeway.

DISCUSSION POINTS

1. Opened in 1977, the Hoan Bridge is a 1.9-mile tied arch bridge that carries I-794 over the Milwaukee River, connecting I-794 (an auxiliary route of I-94) in downtown Milwaukee to the Lake Freeway on the south side of the river. Much of the area underneath the bridge is water or is unoccupied. However, located underneath the bridge are also portions of the Summerfest grounds and some publicly- or privately-owned property, most notably Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District buildings.

2. The Department of Transportation (DOT) notes that installing safety fencing to the Hoan Bridge is necessary to address safety concerns. According to the Department, falling debris (such as snow, ice, tires and auto parts, and trash) from the bridge has created worker and pedestrian safety concerns as well as property damage issues. The Department notes that the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District reported at least 30 safety incidents in 2018 and 2019. In addition, the fencing could ameliorate other safety concerns, such as suicide attempts.

3. The Department indicates that it has reviewed data and conducted investigations regarding various solutions to address these safety concerns, including the structural ability of the bridge to support additional safety fencing. Based on their review, the Department recommends installing safety fencing on both sides of the bridge totaling approximately 8,600 feet at an estimated total cost of \$1,022,300. Despite the noted safety concerns, the Department did not include funding

for additional safety fencing on the Hoan Bridge in their 2021-23 biennium agency budget request. However, providing this funding to the Department's highway systems management and operations appropriation in 2021-22 was included as part of the Governor's in 2021-23 biennial budget recommendations. Almost half of the proposed fencing would be on portions of the bridge that are above the Summerfest grounds, and about one-third would be on fencing above the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District. The remaining fencing would primarily be above the Milwaukee River. Given the documented safety incidents associated with the Hoan Bridge, the additional safety fencing is necessary and worthwhile to address the existing safety concerns. Providing \$1,022,300 in 2021-22 would address these concerns. [Alternative 1]

4. In the 2013-15 budget, DOT received \$226.0 million (including \$200.0 million in SEG-supported bonding) for the rehabilitation of the Hoan Bridge and the adjoining I-794 Lake Interchange. Subsequently, under 2015 Act 55, an additional \$16.8 million was provided for painting the Hoan Bridge, and to fund change orders on the existing construction contract and remaining project costs. These outstanding safety concerns were not addressed as part of the recent rehabilitation project.

5. Moreover, under the base level funding currently included in the substitute amendment to Assembly Bill 68/Senate Bill 111, expenditures from the transportation fund are significantly higher than under the Governor's recommendations. The Governor's recommendations reduced SEG funding to the state highway improvement program and replaced that funding with bonding. Further, while the 2019-21 budget increased revenues to the transportation fund, the coronavirus pandemic has dampened the impact of those revenue increases to the fund, as well as to ongoing base level revenues. The Committee already took action to reduce transportation fund appropriations, including adopting standard budget adjustments and reestimates of sum sufficient debt service appropriations that reduced appropriations by \$46.5 million in 2021-22 and \$31.4 million in 2022-23. Despite these actions and slightly higher estimated revenues, prior to Committee actions on the remainder of the transportation budget the estimated 2022-23 ending balance is -\$32.3 million. Thus, the availability of SEG funding of \$1,022,300 to address safety concerns with the Hoan Bridge may be limited. [Alternative 2]

ALTERNATIVES

1. Provide \$1,022,300 in 2021-22 to install fencing improvements on the Hoan Bridge in Milwaukee County to provide additional safety on the bridge.

ALT 1	Change to Base
SEG	\$1,022,300

2. Take no action.

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