

Transportation

State Patrol

(LFB Budget Summary Document: Page 699)

LFB Summary Items for Which an Issue Paper Has Been Prepared

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Joint Committee on Finance

Paper #785

State Patrol Equipment and Open Records Staffing (Transportation – State Patrol)

[LFB 2025-27 Budget Summary: Page 699, #1, #2 and #4]

CURRENT LAW

The primary responsibility of the Division of State Patrol is enforcement of traffic and commercial vehicle laws by conducting highway patrols and inspecting trucks, ambulances, school buses, and other large vehicles. State Patrol employs two types of state troopers. Traffic officers are primarily responsible for patrolling interstate highways, where they are typically deployed on a 24-hour basis (except those in Milwaukee County, which are patrolled by the Milwaukee County Sheriff), as well as U.S. and state highways, where they are generally posted based upon traffic volumes. State Patrol also employs commercial motor vehicle inspectors, who specialize in enforcement of commercial motor vehicle laws and regulations. Inspectors are assigned either to one of 12 safety and weight enforcement facilities located around the state, or to mobile duty.

State Patrol currently provides state troopers with tasers, as well as in-vehicle video cameras for their squad vehicles. State troopers in State Patrol's southwest region are also provided with body-worn cameras. To respond to requests for footage from in-vehicle and body cameras, State Patrol also employs staff who process open records requests. State Patrol's budget is primarily funded from the State Patrol SEG general operations appropriation. However, the 2017-19 budget created a GPR appropriation for State Patrol equipment, which can be used for purchasing in-vehicle video camera equipment, tactical vests, and helmets.

DISCUSSION POINTS

1. This paper discusses the following provisions from Senate Bill 45/Assembly Bill 50 (SB 45/AB 50) associated with State Patrol equipment: (a) providing \$3,980,300 GPR in 2025-26 to fund a three-year contract for State Patrol's existing in-vehicle video cameras; (b) providing \$3,628,200

SEG in 2025-26 for the one-time purchase of 320 body-worn cameras; (c) providing \$247,600 SEG in 2025-26, \$320,100 in 2026-27, and 6.00 FTE to hire additional staff to fulfill open records requests; and (d) providing \$2,437,200 GPR in 2025-26 to fund the one-time purchase of 500 tasers for State Troopers.

A. Data Storage for In-Vehicle Video Cameras

2. State Patrol utilizes in-vehicle cameras for a variety of reasons. Video recordings can protect officers and the Department from liability concerns, serve as a valuable training tool for improving officer performance and safety, and be used for internal personnel investigations. The 2023-25 budget act provided State Patrol with one-time funding of \$2,178,000 GPR in 2023-24 for in-vehicle cameras. The Department used this funding to sign a two-year contract that provides 320 cameras for state troopers, and funds maintenance and data storage services for the cameras through January, 2026. While the current contract will fund State Patrol's in-vehicle camera costs for two years, the cameras that were purchased in 2023-24 have a useful life of five years.

3. To establish a contract that would fund continued use of State Patrol's 320 in-vehicle cameras, as well as maintenance and data storage costs for the cameras over their remaining three years of useful life, SB 45/AB 50 would provide one-time funding of \$3,980,300 in 2025-26 to State Patrol's GPR equipment appropriation. While State Patrol's budget is primarily funded from the transportation fund, use of general fund revenues for this purpose may be appropriate given State Patrol's broader impact on statewide public safety. In addition, the general fund could be used to assist with purchasing equipment for State Patrol. The Department indicates that if this additional funding were not provided, State Patrol would not have funding available for in-vehicle cameras once its current contract expires in January, 2026. This would prevent the Department from using video and audio files from the cameras for open records requests, liability protection, training, and internal personnel investigations. [Alternative A1a]

4. While SB 45/AB 50 would fund this recommendation with general fund revenues, State Patrol's budget is primarily funded with SEG revenues from the transportation fund. The primary rationale for this funding structure is that transportation fund revenues are specifically designated for transportation purposes, and State Patrol enforces laws on the state trunk highway system. To be consistent with this funding model, the recommendation to provide \$3,980,300 for in-vehicle cameras could be funded with SEG revenues from the transportation fund, rather than general fund revenues. [Alternative A1b]

5. Rather than funding State Patrol's in-vehicle cameras over their remaining three years of useful life, two years of funding, or \$2,653,600, could be provided in 2025-26. This would fund costs for State Patrol's 320 existing in-vehicle cameras through January, 2028. If DOT requires additional funding for in-vehicle cameras in the 2027-29 biennium, the Department could submit an additional request for funding for this purpose in the 2027-29 budget. [Alternatives A2a or A2b] Alternatively, additional funding of \$1,326,800 annually could be provided on an ongoing basis, as these camera-related costs will likely continue beyond the useful life of State Patrol's existing cameras. This would fully-fund State Patrol's estimated annual costs for its existing 320 in-vehicle cameras, and would also provide ongoing base funding for this purpose in the 2027-29 biennium and beyond, which would allow State Patrol to continue funding in-vehicle cameras in future years without having to request

additional funding at a later time. [Alternatives A3a or A3b]

6. If no additional funding is approved, State Patrol would no longer be provided with dedicated funding for to cover expenses for its 320 in-vehicle cameras. The Department could still fund any necessary costs for cameras, data storage, and maintenance by reallocating funds under its SEG State Patrol general operations appropriation. However, State Patrol would need to weigh this need with other Division priorities. This would reduce the amount of funding that is available for other needs in State Patrol's budget. The Department could also decide not to renew the contract for its 320 in-vehicle cameras if dedicated funding were not provided for this purpose. As a result, state troopers would no longer be provided with in-vehicle cameras. [Alternative A4]

B. Body-Worn Cameras

7. In 2018, the Joint Legislative Council established the Study Committee on the Use of Police Body Cameras. As a result of this study, the Legislature enacted 2019 Act 108, which created standards for law enforcement agencies that use body-worn cameras. Subsequently, the 2021-23 budget provided State Patrol with one-time funding of \$700,000 SEG in 2021-22 to purchase body-worn cameras. The Department used these funds to purchase 54 body-worn camera systems at a cost of approximately \$13,000 per camera, including hardware and data storage costs. Subsequently, the Department initiated a body-worn camera pilot program in State Patrol's southwest region, where the 54 cameras are currently deployed with state troopers.

8. The Department reports that the body-worn camera pilot program has been a success, and that, as with in-vehicle cameras, the body-worn cameras offer several advantages to State Patrol and the public. However, the cameras that were purchased in 2021-22 are nearing their end of useful life. As a result, the Department is requesting one-time funding of \$3,628,200 SEG in 2025-26 to purchase 320 new body-worn cameras at a cost of approximately \$11,300 per camera. This funding would be used to purchase camera hardware, and also establish a five-year maintenance and data storage contract that would last over the camera's expected five-year lifespan. The Department indicates that these 320 body-worn cameras are designed to be used in conjunction with the 320 in-vehicle cameras that were purchased in 2023-24. This would provide a set of body-worn and in-vehicle cameras for the majority of State Patrol's sworn personnel, which would create additional transparency for State Patrol and the public. [Alternative B1]

9. SB 45/AB 50 would fund the new body-worn cameras with SEG revenues from the transportation fund, while funding in-vehicle cameras with general fund revenues. Given State Patrol's broader impact on statewide public safety, and the availability of surplus general fund revenues in the 2025-27 biennium, the purchase of body-worn cameras could also be funded from the general fund, rather than the transportation fund. Since State Patrol's GPR equipment appropriation can only be used for video camera equipment, tactical vests, and helmets under current law, this would require the appropriation to be modified to allow for the purchase of body-worn cameras. [Alternative B2]

10. The Department indicates that it would not want to purchase additional body-worn cameras for state troopers without also being provided with additional positions to respond to open records requests, as discussed in the following section. These additional positions would introduce

ongoing expenditures to DOT's budget. With limited transportation fund revenues available for additional spending in the 2025-27 biennium, these requests would create additional costs that may not be feasible at this time. If the additional body-worn cameras were not approved, State Patrol could continue using the 54 body-worn cameras that are currently deployed in its southwest region through their end of useful life in 2026-27. [Alternative B3]

C. Staffing for Open Records Requests

11. The video and audio evidence that State Patrol collects from its in-vehicle and body-worn cameras is subject to state open records law. State Patrol is required to retain footage for a minimum period of 120 days for body-worn cameras, and 90 days for in-vehicle cameras, and these timeframes must also be extended in serious cases. Open records requests can offer benefits to both State Patrol and the public, as they can provide decisive evidence for court cases, and can protect officers from liability concerns. However, State Patrol also incurs significant administrative costs from processing and storing camera footage and responding to open records requests, as personnel must spend time categorizing and reviewing footage, and performing any required redactions before they distribute footage to external stakeholders. The Department notes that open records requests may be particularly burdensome for body-worn cameras, as staff may be required to manage footage from several cameras when multiple officers respond to an incident.

12. During the 2023-25 budget, the Department indicated that it employed 2.0 FTE to respond to open records requests, and requested an additional 2.0 FTE for this purpose. However, this request was not adopted. Meanwhile, the number of open records requests received by State Patrol has steadily grown from approximately 5,200 requests in 2021, to 7,150 in 2022, 8,500 in 2023, and 8,950 in 2024. As a result, the Department indicates that it was forced to assign open records request job duties to six existing staff members in the 2023-25 biennium, in addition to the two staff that were already employed for this purpose. The Department states that if funding for additional body-worn cameras were approved, demand for open records requests would approximately double from the current level. As a result, the Department is requesting position authority to hire 6.0 FTE to fulfill open records requests along with a corresponding increase in ongoing funding of \$247,600 SEG in 2025-26, and \$320,100 SEG in 2026-27 to fund these positions. The Department indicates that if funding for additional body-worn cameras were approved without providing additional positions, State Patrol staff would not have the capacity to address the added workload from the additional cameras. [Alternative C1]

13. If no additional funding for body-worn cameras is approved, demand for open records requests would likely remain near current levels. Nonetheless, State Patrol could still be provided with some additional positions in the 2025-27 biennium in recognition that demand for open records requests has steadily grown in recent years, and that State Patrol was forced to reassign duties for several existing staff members to handle the growing workload. In the previous budget, the Department requested two additional positions to respond to open records requests from its current stock of in-vehicle cameras and 54 body-worn cameras. Corresponding to this request, two additional open records positions could be provided to State Patrol in the 2025-27 biennium, along with additional funding of \$82,600 SEG in 2025-26 and \$106,700 SEG in 2026-27 to fund these positions. [Alternative C2]

14. If funding for additional body-worn cameras is not approved, State Patrol's position authority could also be kept at current levels. This would not place additional funding burdens on the transportation fund at this time, and State Patrol would continue to operate with eight staff assisting with workload associated with open records requests. [Alternative C3]

D. Upgraded Tasers

15. The Department currently equips state troopers with tasers, which allow troopers to incapacitate violent or dangerous individuals while minimizing the risk of physical injury to suspects and themselves. The Department indicates that troopers deploy tasers about 20 times per year. State Patrol's current stock of tasers were purchased in 2015 and 2016, and have outlived their five-year warranty. Further, the taser model that the Department purchased in 2015 and 2016 was discontinued in 2021. Spare parts and batteries can still be procured for this model, but it is unknown how long these components will continue to be available.

16. SB 45/AB 50 would provide \$2,437,200 GPR to fund the one-time purchase of 500 new tasers for state troopers, as well as a five-year support contract for the tasers, for a cost of approximately \$4,874 per device. The Department indicates that the new tasers would offer several advantages over the model purchased in 2015 and 2016, including longer-lasting rechargeable batteries and a longer effective range. This recommendation would be funded from the general fund. As discussed previously, use of general fund revenues may be appropriate for purchasing tasers given State Patrol's broader impact on statewide public safety, as well as the availability of general fund revenues in the 2025-27 biennium. However, under current law, State Patrol's GPR equipment appropriation can only be used for video camera equipment, tactical vests, and helmets. Thus, to fund the purchase of tasers with GPR, the existing GPR appropriation would need to be modified to allow for the purchase of tasers. [Alternative D1]

17. The \$2,437,200 in recommended funding could also be provided with SEG revenues from the transportation fund. State Patrol's budget is primarily funded with transportation fund revenues, and use of transportation fund revenues for purchasing tasers may be appropriate given State Patrol's primary responsibility of enforcing traffic and commercial vehicle laws on the state trunk highway system. [Alternative D2]

18. If no additional funding were provided, State Patrol would retain its existing stock of tasers. While the five-year warranty for these tasers has expired and more advanced models are now available, the Department indicates that it is still able to procure spare parts and batteries for its current tasers. State Patrol could still request funding to replace the tasers in a later budget if a greater need for new tasers arises. [Alternative D3]

ALTERNATIVES

A. Data Storage for In-Vehicle Video Cameras

1. Provide \$3,980,300 in 2025-26 to the State Patrol equipment appropriation to fund a three-year contract for in-vehicle video cameras and related costs.

- a. Provide the amounts with GPR funding

ALT A1a	Change to Base
GPR	\$3,980,300

- b. Provide the amounts with SEG funding.

ALT A1b	Change to Base
SEG	\$3,980,300

2. Provide \$2,653,600 in 2025-26 to the State Patrol equipment appropriation to fund a two-year contract for in-vehicle video cameras and related costs.

- a. Provide the amounts with GPR funding.

ALT A2a	Change to Base
GPR	\$2,653,600

- b. Provide the amounts with SEG funding.

ALT A2b	Change to Base
SEG	\$2,653,600

3. Provide \$1,326,800 annually to the State Patrol equipment appropriation to fund ongoing costs for in-vehicle cameras.

- a. Provide the amounts with GPR funding.

ALT A3a	Change to Base
GPR	\$2,653,600

- b. Provide the amounts with SEG funding.

ALT A3b	Change to Base
SEG	\$2,653,600

4. Take no action.

B. Body-Worn Cameras

1. Provide \$3,628,200 SEG in 2025-26 to the State Patrol general operations appropriation for the one-time purchase of 320 body-worn cameras.

ALT B1	Change to Base
SEG	\$3,628,200

2. Provide \$3,628,200 GPR in 2025-26 to the State Patrol GPR equipment appropriation for the one-time purchase of 320 body-worn cameras. Modify the State Patrol GPR equipment appropriation to provide, from the general fund, the amounts in the schedule for state patrol equipment.

ALT B2	Change to Base
GPR	\$3,628,200

3. Take no action.

C. Staffing for Open Records Requests

1. Provide 6.00 FTE, \$247,600 SEG in 2025-26, and \$320,100 SEG in 2026-27 to the State Patrol general operations appropriation to hire additional staff to process open records requests.

ALT C1	Change to Base	
	Funding	Positions
SEG	\$567,700	6.00

2. Provide 2.00 FTE, \$82,600 SEG in 2025-26, and \$106,700 SEG in 2026-27 to the State Patrol general operations appropriation to hire additional staff to process open records requests.

ALT C2	Change to Base	
	Funding	Positions
SEG	\$189,300	2.00

3. Take no action.

D. Upgraded Tasers

1. Provide \$2,437,200 GPR in 2025-26 to the State Patrol GPR equipment appropriation

to fund the one-time purchase of 500 tasers for state troopers, as well as a five-year support contract for these devices. Modify the State Patrol general fund equipment appropriation to provide, from the general fund, the amounts in the schedule for state patrol equipment.

ALT D1	Change to Base
GPR	\$2,437,200

2. Provide \$2,437,200 SEG in 2025-26 to the State Patrol general operations appropriation to fund the one-time purchase of 500 tasers for state troopers, as well as a five-year support contract for these devices.

ALT D2	Change to Base
SEG	\$2,437,200

3. Take no action.

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Joint Committee on Finance

Paper #786

State Trooper Overtime (Transportation -- State Patrol)

[LFB 2025-27 Budget Summary: Page 699, #3]

CURRENT LAW

The primary responsibility of the Division of State Patrol is enforcement of traffic and commercial vehicle laws by conducting highway patrols and inspecting trucks, ambulances, school buses, and other large vehicles. State Patrol employs two types of state troopers. Traffic officers are primarily responsible for patrolling interstate highways, where they are typically deployed on a 24-hour basis (except those in Milwaukee County, which are patrolled by the Milwaukee County Sheriff), as well as U.S. and state highways, where they are generally posted based upon traffic volumes. State law specifies that State Patrol can hire no more than 399 traffic officers. State Patrol also employs commercial motor vehicle inspectors, who specialize in enforcement of commercial motor vehicle laws and regulations. Inspectors are assigned either to one of 12 safety and weight enforcement facilities that are located around the state, or to mobile duty. There is no statutory limit on the number of commercial motor vehicle inspectors that State Patrol can employ. State Patrol's budget is funded largely from the State Patrol SEG general operations appropriation.

DISCUSSION POINTS

Background

1. Under standard budget adjustments, funding associated with overtime is entirely removed in the calculations of full funding of salaries and fringe benefits. The budget instructions specify that only the same amounts currently budgeted for overtime may be included under standard budget adjustments, modified for the new fringe benefit rates for the upcoming biennium. Any additional overtime amounts determined necessary must be separately requested and are provided as supplemental funding. In the 2025-27 biennium, State Patrol's base overtime budget, as established under the overtime standard budget adjustment, is \$1,862,100 SEG annually.

2. State troopers typically earn overtime pay of 1.5 times their hourly wage when they work more than 40 hours per week. Troopers may work overtime for activities that are scheduled in advance, such as escorting oversized vehicles, providing traffic control services at events, or participating in federal safety initiatives. Third parties who request these scheduled services typically reimburse State Patrol for its overtime costs from these activities. However, troopers also work unscheduled overtime to respond to crashes, intoxicated driver arrests, natural disasters, civil disturbances, or to provide sick leave coverage for other officers. State Patrol is not reimbursed for these unscheduled overtime activities, and must thus fund these costs from its existing budget.

3. Table 1 shows State Patrol's unreimbursed overtime salary costs over the past six years, as well as the number of overtime hours worked and the average overtime pay rate over this period, as reported by the Department of Transportation (DOT). The table does not include fringe benefit costs, which State Patrol is also required to pay for overtime. As shown in the table, State Patrol's annual salary expenditures from unreimbursed overtime have ranged between \$2.4 million and \$3.0 million over this period.

TABLE 1

Unreimbursed State Patrol Overtime Expenditures Since 2018-19

<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Overtime Hours Worked</u>	<u>Overtime Salary Expenditures</u>	<u>Average Pay Rate</u>
2018-19	80,735	\$2,930,800	\$36.30
2019-20	67,966	2,484,600	36.56
2020-21	66,035	2,495,500	37.79
2021-22	67,570	2,694,100	39.87
2022-23	69,033	2,893,500	41.91
2023-24	60,961	2,866,200	47.02
Average	68,717	\$2,727,500	\$39.91

4. While State Patrol's unreimbursed overtime salary expenditures have remained somewhat stable over the past six years, the average hourly wage for overtime has increased over this period, as shown in the table. This is due to wage increases that have been provided for state troopers in recent years. State troopers' wage rates are set under a collective bargaining process that occurs separately from the state budget. State Patrol's current pay scale was established under a November, 2023, collective bargaining agreement between the State of Wisconsin and the Wisconsin Law Enforcement Association (WLEA). Table 2 shows the pay scale for 2023-24 and 2024-25 under the current collective bargaining agreement, and the troopers' pay scale for the first half of 2023, as established under the previous agreement. The current agreement increased troopers' wages from the previous agreement as follows: (a) an increase of 4% in 2023-24 associated with the 4% general wage adjustment provided in 2023-24; (b) a further increase of \$5 per hour in 2023-24 to reflect the provision in the 2023-25 budget to raise state trooper pay by that amount; and (c) an increase of 2% in 2024-25 associated with the 2% general wage adjustment provided in 2024-25.

TABLE 2**State Patrol Traffic Officer and Inspector Pay Progression Structure**

Years of Law Enforcement Experience	Hourly Pay Rate		
	January 1, 2023 - <u>June 29, 2023</u>	June 30, 2023 - <u>June 30, 2024</u>	June 30, 2024 - <u>June 30, 2025</u>
0	\$27.56	\$33.67	\$34.35
0.5	28.31	34.45	35.14
2	28.84	35.00	35.70
3	29.37	35.55	36.27
4	30.18	36.39	37.12
5	32.04	38.33	39.10
6	34.18	40.55	41.37
7	39.96	46.56	47.50

5. State Patrol currently has position authority for 307 traffic officers and 91 inspectors (not including supervisory ranks such as sergeant, lieutenant, captain, major, and colonel). Table 3 shows the number of vacancies for traffic officer and inspector positions as of March for each year since 2019. As shown in the table, the number of vacancies for traffic officer positions decreased between March, 2019 and March, 2023, but has increased over the past two years. Meanwhile, inspector vacancies increased between March, 2019 and March, 2021, and have remained relatively stable since then. Many law enforcement agencies, both in Wisconsin and nationwide, have reported staffing shortages and difficulty recruiting and retaining qualified officers in recent years. The wage increase of \$5 per hour that was enacted in the 2023-25 budget was primarily provided in order to improve State Patrol's vacancy rate. However, as shown in the table, this has not yet resulted in a demonstrable reduction in state trooper vacancies.

TABLE 3**State Patrol Traffic Officer and Inspector Vacancies Since 2019**

<u>Year</u>	<u>Vacancies, as of March</u>	
	<u>Traffic Officers</u>	<u>Inspectors</u>
2019	38	4
2020	44	8
2021	24	14
2022	26	12
2023	21	16
2024	35	17
2025	39	15

6. DOT states that the number of overtime hours worked by State Patrol is primarily a

product of workload demands on state troopers, rather than vacancy rates. The Department indicates that the decline in overtime hours in 2023-24, as shown in Table 1, was due to fewer extreme weather events such as winter storms occurring in that year, which resulted in reduced demands for state troopers to respond to traffic accidents.

Funding Level

7. As mentioned, State Patrol is provided base level funding for overtime costs in each budget under standard budget adjustments. However, the Department indicates State Patrol's base overtime funding has been insufficient to fully-fund State Patrol's actual overtime costs in recent years. The Department has funded these unbudgeted overtime costs in past years by: (a) utilizing federal funds from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA); (b) requesting additional funding through pay plan supplementation process managed by the Department of Administration; and (c) reallocating funds that are budgeted for other purposes under the State Patrol general operations appropriation. However, ARPA funds will no longer be available to cover overtime costs in the 2025-27 biennium, as the federal government required all ARPA funds to be obligated by the end of 2024. Further, pay plan supplement funds for salary costs are generally intended to be used for authorized pay increases, not for overtime costs, and are also subject to annual caps that limit the amount of funding that can be provided each year. Consequently, DOT's only available response to fund necessary overtime costs would be to reallocate funds within the State Patrol general operations appropriation, which can reduce the amount of funding that is available for other needs in State Patrol's budget.

8. DOT's annual overtime expenditures may also increase beyond the range of \$2.4 million to \$3.0 million that has been observed over the past six years. While State Troopers worked less overtime in 2023-24 due to an unusually mild winter, if past trends return, the need for overtime will also recur. In addition, the hourly wage rates State Patrol must pay for overtime increased in the 2023-25 biennium, and could rise further if any additional rate increases are negotiated by WLEA in the 2025-27 when its current collective bargaining agreement expires at the end of 2024-25.

9. In the 2025-27 biennium, State Patrol would be provided with \$1,862,100 SEG annually in base funding for overtime costs under its standard budget adjustments. Senate Bill 45/Assembly Bill 50 (SB 45/AB 50) would provide an additional \$2,105,600 SEG annually in ongoing funding for State Patrol overtime costs. This would result in total overtime funding of \$3,967,700 SEG annually being provided on an ongoing basis, including \$3,426,300 for overtime salary costs and \$541,400 for fringe benefit costs (at the variable fringe rate of 15.8%). This funding level of \$3.4 million for overtime salary costs would exceed State Patrol's historical overtime salary costs, which have ranged between \$2.4 million and \$3.0 million annually over the past six years. This higher funding level may be needed given the continued workload demands on state troopers and increasing wage rates. [Alternative 1]

10. As shown in Table 1, State Patrol has averaged \$2,727,500 in annual overtime salary expenditures over the past six years. To provide funding based on this historical level of expenditures, \$2,727,500 annually could be provided for overtime salary costs, along with \$430,900 annually for associated fringe benefit costs (at the variable fringe rate of 15.8%), for a total annual funding level of \$3,158,400. Since \$1,862,100 SEG in annual funding is already available under the overtime standard budget adjustment, this alternative would require \$1,296,300 SEG annually in additional

funding for State Patrol's general operations appropriation. [Alternative 2]

11. As shown in Table 3, State Patrol has maintained several position vacancies in recent years. These positions are funded at the base salary and fringe for the vacant position in order to have the funding available if the positions are filled during the biennium. If these vacant positions are not filled in the biennium, or other vacancies occur, State Patrol could use available salary and fringe funding associated with vacant positions to fund some of their overtime costs. Thus, rather than fully-funding the overtime funding identified under Alternative 2, half of this funding, or \$648,200 SEG annually, could instead be provided in the 2025-27 biennium. Any remaining overtime costs in the 2025-27 biennium could be paid with funding associated with position vacancies. However, while funding associated with position vacancies is available to fund overtime costs in the 2025-27 biennium, this would not fund overtime costs on ongoing basis. As a result, the need for an additional increase in base overtime funding could continue in the 2027-29 biennium under this alternative. [Alternative 3]

12. The transportation fund has limited revenues available in the 2025-27 biennium. Further, State Patrol has been able to fund its excess overtime costs in past years by reallocating funding within the State Patrol general operations appropriation, or by requesting additional funding from the pay plan supplementation process. While reallocating funding in the State Patrol general operations appropriation reduces the amount of funding that is available for other needs in State Patrol's budget, State Patrol has been able to successfully fund its excess overtime costs in this manner over the past several years. [Alternative 4]

ALTERNATIVES

1. Provide \$2,105,600 SEG annually in ongoing funding to the State Patrol general operations appropriation to fund salary and fringe costs associated with overtime pay for Wisconsin state troopers.

ALT 1	Change to Base
SEG	\$4,211,200

2. Provide \$1,296,300 SEG annually in ongoing funding to the State Patrol general operations appropriation to fund salary and fringe costs associated with overtime pay for Wisconsin state troopers.

ALT 2	Change to Base
SEG	\$2,592,600

3. Provide \$648,200 SEG annually in ongoing funding to the State Patrol general operations appropriation to fund salary and fringe costs associated with overtime pay for Wisconsin state troopers.

ALT 3	Change to Base
SEG	\$1,296,400

4. Take no action.

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Joint Committee on Finance

Paper #787

Microwave Radio Network (Transportation -- State Patrol)

[LFB 2025-27 Budget Summary: Page 700, #5]

CURRENT LAW

The primary responsibility of the Division of State Patrol is enforcement of traffic and commercial vehicle laws by conducting highway patrols and inspecting trucks, ambulances, school buses, and other large vehicles. To support this mission, State Patrol operates a statewide microwave radio network, which provides dispatch and communications to State Patrol officers while on duty. State Patrol's budget is funded largely from the State Patrol SEG general operations appropriation.

DISCUSSION POINTS

1. State Patrol's microwave radio network was established in the early 1950s, and was originally used to connect nine radio frequency repeater stations. DOT indicates that State Patrol currently owns and maintains 72 communications towers and another 92 network locations across the state. State Patrol also operates a complex statewide microwave radio network that is deployed on these sites, which provides telephone and internet connectivity for State Patrol and a variety of other state and federal agencies.

2. DOT's tower and radio infrastructure also serves as the backbone for the Wisconsin Interoperable System for Communications (WISCOM), a radio system that permits emergency responders to communicate across jurisdictions and serves over 1,200 user organizations, including several state agencies, as well as a variety of federal, county, and municipal law enforcement agencies. This network allows these agencies to provide and coordinate services, particularly during emergencies. The legacy WISCOM system, administered by the Department of Military Affairs (DMA), is currently being upgraded to a new system (WISCOM 800). WISCOM 800 will utilize towers owned by the Departments of Transportation, Corrections, Health Services, Military Affairs,

and Natural Resources, as well as the Educational Communications Board, the University of Wisconsin System, local governments, and utility companies, and will also utilize privately-owned leased tower sites. The upgraded WISCOM equipment on these towers will be owned and maintained by DMA. However, State Patrol is responsible for maintaining its tower network on which WISCOM hardware is deployed, as well as the microwave backhaul system (which allows signals to be transmitted between sites) that supports the WISCOM network.

3. The Department states that its radio infrastructure requires routine maintenance and upgrades to sustain operations and ensure proper service. As a result, the Department is requesting \$1,253,500 SEG annually in ongoing funding to upgrade communications links on the statewide microwave radio network. This funding would be used to establish a seven-year master lease that would upgrade 59 of the approximately 98 links that are currently deployed in the state. The total estimated cost of the master lease would be \$8,774,500, including \$7,080,000 associated with upgrading 59 links at an estimated cost of \$120,000 each, and \$1,694,500 in projected interest costs.

4. The Department has made similar requests in each of the past two budgets to upgrade 59 communications links under a seven-year master lease. However, these requests were not enacted. The total estimated cost of the project has risen to \$8.8 million, compared to the \$6.6 million request in the 2021-23 budget and the \$7.8 million request in the 2023-25 budget, due to inflation and advances in technology over this period. The Department states that the new communications links will be considerably more advanced than its current equipment, and would improve the quality and reliability of the statewide radio network, ensuring that State Patrol and other agencies have reliable communications for day-to-day operations and emergencies. The Department also states that many of its current communications links are reaching their end of useful life, and that components are scarce. If the Department's current links are not replaced, the Department may be unable to make needed repairs in future years if replacement parts are no longer available. [Alternative 1]

5. In its past budget requests, the Department reported that it had previously operated under two seven-year master leases that, combined, provided \$524,300 in annual funding for communications link upgrades. While both master leases have now expired (in 2021 and 2023), this base funding remains in the State Patrol general operations appropriation. The Department states that it used the ongoing funding in the current biennium to cover other costs associated with communications infrastructure, such as inspections, maintenance, and replacing equipment for communications towers, and did not use any of this funding to replace communications links. However, the 2023-25 biennial budget also provided \$1.3 million in one-time funding to complete maintenance work on the communications towers. Recognizing the availability of \$524,300 ongoing base funding, \$729,200 annually (\$1,253,500 in recommended funding - \$524,300 in existing funding) could instead be provided in the 2025-27 budget, which could fund the \$8.8 million master lease proposed by the Department. [Alternative 2]

6. The 2023-25 biennial budget provided DMA with one-time funding of \$45 million GPR to fund the first phase of WISCOM 800, while the Governor's 2025-27 budget bill includes a recommendation to provide \$79.7 million in additional funding to DMA to fund the next phase of the project. DMA indicates that the total cost of the project will include \$12.0 million for microwave backhaul equipment and installation. According to DMA, it will provide funding to DOT to make

replacements or enhancements to the microwave backhaul system in order to support WISCOM 800. DMA specifies that DOT will continue to fund maintenance for the microwave backhaul system and the DOT tower network. Given that DMA intends to provide DOT with funding to upgrade the microwave backhaul system, funding may not be needed for this purpose in the 2025-27 biennium until a better assessment of the level of DOT-funded communication link upgrades is known. Note that additional funding may be required for maintenance of the upgraded microwave backhaul equipment in future biennia. Further, as discussed previously, DOT has previously indicated that it has \$524,300 in base funding available to replace communications links. If no additional funding were provided, DOT could continue to use this base funding to upgrade approximately 4 links per year at an estimated \$120,000 each, or approximately 28 links over a seven-year period. If DOT does not need to fund upgrades, it could instead use the base funding of \$524,300 for maintenance of the upgraded microwave backhaul equipment. [Alternative 3]

ALTERNATIVES

1. Provide ongoing funding of \$1,253,500 SEG annually to the State Patrol general operations appropriation to upgrade communications links on the statewide microwave radio network.

ALT 1	Change to Base
SEG	\$2,507,000

2. Provide ongoing funding of \$729,200 SEG annually to the State Patrol general operations appropriation to upgrade communications links on the statewide microwave radio network. Base funding of \$524,300 annually could also be used for this purpose.

ALT 2	Change to Base
SEG	\$1,458,400

3. Take no action.

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