



# WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

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## Assembly Republican Leaders Ask for New Highway Estimates

**Madison** – Assembly Republican leaders want to know the real price tag for future Wisconsin highway construction. The top GOP Assembly leaders sent a letter to Department of Transportation Secretary Dave Ross requesting a full review of cost estimates for all ongoing projects planned or budgeted for the 2017-19 and 2019-21 biennia, updated figures for projects yet to be enumerated and a comprehensive report on all projects since 2010 documenting the estimated costs and the total actual costs.

This request is in response to a [recent audit](#) that showed the department grossly underestimated the total bill of previous projects. The leaders want accurate figures before lawmakers begin work on the budget.

“Taxpayers deserve to know how much a road is going to cost before it’s built,” said Speaker Robin Vos (R-Rochester). “Unfortunately, these miscalculations will probably confirm what many of us fear; our transportation fund is deeper in the red than we thought.”

On Thursday, the Legislative Audit Bureau released its report on the State Highway Program. The audit details how incomplete estimates in the past 10 years for certain projects have blindsided state officials with \$4 billion more in unexpected expenditures. More accurate figures are necessary for policy makers to make better fiscal decisions for the state during the budget process.

“This audit makes it clear that inflation and project delays have ballooned the costs of road construction and repairs,” said Majority Leader Jim Steineke (R-Kaukauna). “If we continue to let these projects lag, it is immediately obvious what will happen: costs will continue to spiral out of control. We need to fix what we can now and as we go forward, we must have an accurate forecast of project costs *before* they begin.”

“Our role in the Legislature is to ensure the final state budget serves the entire state of Wisconsin,” said Representative John Nygren (R-Marinette), co-chair of the Joint Committee on Finance. “We need to be confident in the estimates we are given. I hope a review of these projects will confirm that the projections are correct, but if that is not the case, we need to be informed so future taxpayers don’t end up in a bigger hole.”

The letter is asking the department to report back to the Legislature by March 15<sup>th</sup>.

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