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A Wisconsin Forests and Freight Rail Preservation Program 2019-2020

Purposes:

- Increase “go to market” value of resources grown in Wisconsin forests.
- Promote sustainable harvesting to minimize exposure of the forests to fire and disease and to assure preservation and access for hunting, fishing and other recreational activities.
- Minimize the number of over-the-road log truck trips to mill and concentration of log truck traffic in communities at mill destination.
- Support rail access for conversion of non-log, over-the-road truckload freight to rail to share fixed costs of lighter density rail lines necessary for the health of the forests.
- Avoid or minimize the likelihood of additional State-owned rail lines.

Funding:

- Forty Million Dollars (\$40,000,000) for the biennium.
- General revenue funds.
- Forests and Freight Rail Preservation Program (“F2RPP”) administered by WisDOT.

Relevant Specification:

1. Comparable to WisDOT’s current Freight Rail Preservation Program except explicitly available for investments in Class I railroad lines, rail rolling stock, and as matching funds for federal and other grants.
2. Rail rolling stock operations limited to freight originating and/or terminating in Wisconsin or upon agreement extended to the Great Lakes Forests Region in Michigan and Minnesota.
3. Eligible investments include (but are not limited to): (a) rail line and related facilities; (b) industry spurs and switches; (c) public, public-private and railroad owned for transloading logs and other commodities and intermodal freight, transloading road maintenance and construction materials; and (d) public roadway and bridge maintenance and rehabilitation to accommodate full legal weight commercial motor vehicles moving to and from rail connections via less circuitous routes.
4. Local match waived for sites in rural areas (to be defined).