

## 7. Future activity

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The analysis contained in the preceding chapters sought to answer the following fundamental planning question: As the need to expand the existing park and ride system arises, what locations should be considered and why? Going forward, there are several issues that should be taken into consideration as this plan is implemented.

### 7.1 System implementation

#### Use of available right of way

According to the Iowa DOT's Office of Right of Way, the majority of available right of way involves small, irregular-shaped parcels of land usually left over from intersection improvement projects. Often, these leftover parcels of land are too small and too close to the intersection to allow for acceptable entrance and exit access. Securing additional right of way to expand these intersection parcels would most often involve prohibitive costs and purchase constraints. Although opportunities may be rare, the Iowa DOT has recognized that available right of way suitable for future park and ride use would be of tremendous value from a benefit-cost standpoint.

With this in mind, the Iowa DOT has considered right of way disposal in its policy and procedures related to park and ride facilities. When state-owned right of way is being considered for disposal, the Iowa DOT initiates an internal recommendation process prior to making a final decision. As outlined in the department's park and ride facilities policy, the Office of Systems Planning evaluates the subject property for its potential value as a future park and ride location and factors this evaluation into their office recommendation, ensuring that this potential use is at least considered.

#### Coordination with statewide rideshare program

Park and ride programs are oftentimes part of more comprehensive rideshare programs used to match car pool and van pool participants. Commuters who carpool, vanpool, and use transit services are common users of these types of programs. Rideshare programs are typically free, with online ride-matching services for individuals looking to travel from point A to point B, either on an ongoing basis for commuting purposes or on a one-time basis for a trip or event. Such programs help reduce transportation costs as well as traffic congestion and emissions.

In order to provide Iowans with additional transportation alternatives, the Iowa DOT's Office of Public Transit is developing a statewide rideshare program that can be used to match potential car pool and van pool participants using a single ride-matching system. Historically, rideshare services across Iowa have been administered in a decentralized model where the Iowa DOT has not been involved in the procurement, administration, or marketing of local rideshare programs. This model requires rideshare organizations to provide separate startup funding and yearly support fees, reduces the overall number of matches available for potential rideshare participants, and is not consistently administered across the state.

The result of this has been an inefficient and costly system that does not serve all of Iowa's communities and results in fewer ride matches created. The statewide rideshare project will provide a more efficient, affordable, and user-friendly service by eliminating the need for multiple global administrators, reducing capital and operating expenses, and consolidating services into a single software system. The goal of this program is to increase the number of people who wish to take part in car pools, van pools, and transit services. If the number of persons taking advantage of these options grows, there will be an increased need for park and ride facilities, which makes coordination between the two programs extremely important.

### Partnerships

Related to the issues above, successful implementation of this plan will require effective partnerships between various Iowa DOT entities. This is especially true for the six Iowa DOT districts and the Offices of Maintenance, Public Transit, Right of Way, and Systems Planning. Each of these offices will play a critical role in implementation, and each has distinct responsibilities outlined in the department's park and ride facilities policy.

Also, as alluded to in Chapter 6, opportunities exist for the Iowa DOT to partner with other public and even private entities. On the public side, this plan allows for a multijurisdictional implementation. Depending on characteristics of each individual location, it may be more conducive for one jurisdiction to pursue park and ride lot development over another. On the private side, property owners such as retail businesses and religious centers could enter into agreements with the Iowa DOT to share their parking facilities for park and ride purposes. Outside of providing a public good, the benefits of this public-private partnership to the private entity would be the potential for increased business and exposure.

## Marketing Iowa's park and ride system

Marketing and advertising of both park and ride programs and rideshare programs is critical to ensuring that the park and ride system is utilized to its full extent. It is much more difficult for commuters to find commuting partners or to locate a convenient park and ride lot if this information is not easily accessible. The most obvious and user-friendly approach to providing this information is through some sort of online resource.

To promote Iowa's park and ride system, the Iowa DOT plans to dedicate a page to ridesharing/park and ride on the department's website. This webpage will be easily accessed from [www.iowadot.gov](http://www.iowadot.gov). In order for the public to better engage with Iowa's park and ride system, an online, interactive mapping tool will also be developed. This tool will use aerial photography and mapping to deliver up-to-date and pertinent information from the statewide park and ride database, and will include the following information.

- Lot location
- Lot access
- Lot surface type
- Lot amenities and available services
- Estimated number of parking spaces
- Transit service availability
- Nearby services and amenities

This tool will be embedded into the department's ridesharing/park and ride webpage and can be accessed from the user's computer or mobile device for immediate and convenient access, eliminating the need for printed maps. And, as the state's park and ride program matures, so too will the associated marketing and advertising efforts.

## 7.2 System coverage

In constraining the analysis to a certain number of priority locations, it is recognized that this results in a park and ride network that would more densely cover some areas of the state than others. This is the logical result of candidate locations following population, employment, and the resulting commuter traffic. While this approach may not appear equitable in a geographic sense, it is the most cost-effective approach in terms of its potential to serve the greatest number of commuters. Similarly, this approach is

consistent with the basic principles of asset management, which continue to grow in importance during this era of insufficient funding and competing needs.

### **Regional replication**

As is indicated through the survey results and additional locations proposed by the public, the demand for park and ride facilities locally exceeds the state's ability to accommodate every need. While, for the purposes of this PRSP, the analysis focused on statewide priority locations, this does not preclude a similar analysis from being conducted at a smaller regional or local level. The same three questions that were the basis for the statewide analysis (below) could be examined at a smaller geographic scale in areas with lower-volume commuter routes. Doing so would identify additional regional or local candidate locations that may not have necessarily been identified as priorities in a statewide context.

1. Which areas have the greatest interaction in terms of commuting activity?
2. What are the most heavily traveled commuter routes between these areas?
3. What locations along these routes would serve the most commuters as they exit their places of residence?

### **Grass-roots efforts**

In the same sense that the statewide analysis should not preclude similar regional or local analyses, this plan should not discourage continued grass-roots ridesharing efforts, which have been the driving force behind much of the existing system of park and ride lots. There are many rural areas of the state where both the percentage of workers who carpool and average commute time are higher than the respective statewide averages of 10.3 percent and 18.6 minutes. Additionally, as mentioned earlier, several locations were identified by the public through the input survey conducted as a part of this planning effort. A map of these locations is provided in Appendix 2, and could be used as a starting point for conversations with those communities interested in the grass-roots program.

While many areas in the state may not have the number of commuters that some of the priority candidate locations have, it may still be a local priority to provide park and ride options to accommodate the commuting public. Recognizing this, the Iowa DOT has developed a partnering toolkit to help facilitate these grass-roots efforts anywhere there may be an interest. This toolkit can be found in Appendix 4.

### 7.3 Periodic evaluation and review

It is common practice in states with mature park and ride programs to continually evaluate the condition and effectiveness of their systems. On an individual facility level, the Iowa DOT's park and ride facilities policy requires annual inspections for all lots. These inspections help ensure that basic maintenance is being provided and that no improvements or repairs are needed. Routine evaluations will also be used to determine lot usage, and the department policy allows for facility closure should usage decrease to a level that no longer warrants basic maintenance.

On a broader system level, this plan should be reviewed periodically to ensure the planned network is still valid given the most current data and progress toward implementation. Over time, changes in population and employment could alter established commuting patterns, which would necessitate such a review. As the trends highlighted in Chapter 2 indicate, the state of Iowa is by no means stagnant when it comes to demographic and economic change.



Public input meetings for the Iowa Park and Ride System Plan