



# Iowa State Rail Plan Final

Chapter 1

*Role of Rail in Statewide Transportation*



## Contents

1.1 Introduction	1-2
1.2 Iowa's Goals for its Multimodal Transportation System	1-2
1.3 Rail Transportation's Role within the Iowa Transportation System	1-3
1.4 Institutional Structure of Iowa's State Rail Program	1-5
1.5 Iowa's Authority to Conduct Rail Planning and Investment	1-10
1.6 Summary of Freight and Passenger Rail Services in Iowa	1-11

## 1.1 Introduction

This document was developed by the Iowa Department of Transportation (Iowa DOT) to serve as Iowa's State Rail Plan (SRP). The Iowa SRP is compliant with the federal Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008 (PRIIA), as amended by the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act of 2015 (FAST Act). In addition to meeting federal requirements, the SRP is intended to formulate a state vision for railroad transportation in the long-range horizon, to the year 2040, and strategies to achieve that vision. With this purpose in mind, the SRP was developed with extensive public participation and involvement by the state's railroads and rail users.

In 2008, the U.S. Congress passed the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act (PRIIA) with the expressed intent of improving passenger rail service in the United States. One of the features of the legislation is the requirement that any state seeking federal assistance for either passenger or freight improvements have an updated state rail plan. The legislation further stipulated the minimum content of the rail plans, which was codified in Public Law 110-432.

This State Rail Plan meets the requirements set forth in that legislation and public law, as well as the final *State Rail Plan Guidance*<sup>1</sup> provided by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) in September 2013.

This chapter serves to illustrate the current and proposed future role of rail in Iowa's multimodal transportation system and describes how the state is organized to provide governmental, legal, and financial support to Iowa's rail transportation system to support economic development and safety improvements.

## 1.2 Iowa's Goals for its Multimodal Transportation System

Iowa's vision and goals for its multimodal transportation system are outlined in a number of recently published documents which are updated periodically.

### 1.2.1 Iowa State Freight Plan

Iowa's State Freight Plan will be completed concurrently with the Iowa State Rail Plan. The primary purpose of the State Freight Plan is to serve as a statewide long-range freight planning document, fully integrated with other state planning initiatives. The State Freight Plan will align with the National Freight Goals to:

- Improve the contribution of the freight transportation system to economic efficiency, productivity, and competitiveness.
- Reduce congestion on the freight transportation system.
- Improve the safety, security, and resilience of the freight transportation system.
- Improve the state of good repair of the freight transportation system.
- Use advanced technology, performance management, innovation, competition, and accountability in operating and maintaining the freight transportation system.
- Reduce adverse environmental and community impacts of the freight system.

### 1.2.2 Iowa State Transportation Plan

*Iowa in Motion – Planning Ahead 2040 (State Transportation Plan) (STP)*<sup>2</sup> builds on Iowa's success with a previous long-range transportation plan and provides direction for all transportation modes in the state, including rail and public transit. The document was adopted and approved in 2012. The STP projects the demand for transportation infrastructure and services to the year 2040 and takes into account the social and economic changes that are expected to occur in the state between 2010 and 2040. The STP underscores the idea that Iowa's economy, quality of life, and competitiveness will require a transportation system that is developed with these changes in mind.

Iowa's adopted guiding principle for transportation is "safely moving people and goods through investments that strengthen our economic vitality." Iowa's associated transportation goals, which support the guiding

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.fra.dot.gov/eLib/Details/L04760>

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.iowadot.gov/iowainmotion/files/IowaInMotion\\_final.pdf](http://www.iowadot.gov/iowainmotion/files/IowaInMotion_final.pdf)

principle and are the basis for decision making and investment actions covering all transportation modes, are<sup>3</sup>:

- Safety — to make Iowa a safer place to travel
- Efficiency — to make the best use of resources
- Quality of Life — to make Iowa a better place to live, work, and travel

### 1.2.3 Iowa Statewide Transportation Improvement Program

The Statewide Transportation Improvement Program 2016-2019 Draft (STIP)<sup>4</sup> is a federally required systematic listing of projects for which federal-aid funding is proposed. This document grows out of the STP and outlines Iowa DOT's funding objectives to maintain a globally competitive and attractive climate for businesses and people, and to ensure that the transportation system contributes to a productive and efficient economy. Iowa's rail network is a key asset in attaining these objectives. The draft STIP identifies projects funded by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), including highway-railroad grade crossing safety projects, and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) programs. These projects may have a potential intersection with the Iowa railroad network. Rail projects in the state have also been added to the STIP in the past for illustrative purposes to support applications for federal grant funding.

## 1.3 Rail Transportation's Role within the Iowa Transportation System

From the operation of the first railroad in the state 160 years ago to the present day, Iowa's rail network has proven to be a major contributor to the development and economic success of the state.

Iowa achieved statehood in 1846 and rail service appeared in the state almost immediately afterward. Construction of the first railroad in Iowa — the fledgling Mississippi and Missouri Rail Road (a predecessor of trunk line Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railroad, described later) — began in 1853, and it opened for service over a short segment from the Mississippi River at Davenport west to Walcott in 1855<sup>5</sup>.

Other railroad ventures soon appeared, and Iowa had approximately 655 miles of railroad in 1860, just before the Civil War began. Railroad expansion in Iowa was rife after the Civil War. The first trans-Iowa railroad — the Chicago, Iowa & Nebraska Railroad (a predecessor of trunk line Chicago & North Western Railway) — was completed between Clinton and Council Bluffs in 1867. Several other trunk lines were similarly built from Chicago through Iowa to Council Bluffs to make a connection with the Union Pacific Railroad for a share of transcontinental rail traffic. By 1890, a wide-ranging 8,366-mile rail network covered the state and linked all of Iowa's urban population centers and rural county seats<sup>6</sup>. Within its first 50 years of statehood, Iowa became a major rail transportation crossroads. Iowa attracted an impressive array of trunk lines, and it was well positioned on several principal transcontinental corridors between Chicago, Denver, and the West Coast, as well as on regional rail corridors to principal Midwestern gateways and rail hubs in neighboring states.

Railroad consolidations occurred with great frequency and created trunk lines with larger networks in Iowa and neighboring states. Primary trunk lines in Iowa in 1910 included the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railway (AT&SF); Chicago & North Western Railway (C&NW); Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad (CB&Q); Chicago Great Western Railway (CGW); Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul & Pacific Railroad (CMStP&P); Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railroad (CRI&P); Great Northern Railway (GN); Illinois Central Railroad (IC); Minneapolis & St. Louis Railway (M&StL); and Wabash Railroad (WAB)<sup>7</sup>.

Railroads assisted in transforming Iowa's dependence on agriculture to a more balanced economy that included economic contributions from industrial and energy development. Rail mileage in Iowa peaked at 10,566 miles circa 1915. In that year, Iowa's rail network included a comprehensive array of trunk lines, short

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.iowadot.gov/iowainmotion/files/IowaInMotion\\_final.pdf](http://www.iowadot.gov/iowainmotion/files/IowaInMotion_final.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.iowadot.gov/program\\_management/stip/20150731STIPDraft.pdf](http://www.iowadot.gov/program_management/stip/20150731STIPDraft.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Grant, H. Roger and Hofsommer, Donovan L.: *Iowa's Railroads: An Album*, Indiana University Press, 2009

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>7</sup> *The Official Guide to the Railways*, July 1910

line railroads, and electric interurban railroads offering passenger and freight rail services to every one of the state's 99 counties.

Railroad passenger service in Iowa began to decline with the improvement of roadways and the affordability of automobiles, starting in the 1920s. Beginning in the 1960s, hundreds of miles of rail line were abandoned due to the poor financial condition of railroads and an increased dependence on the highway mode. A wave of railroad bankruptcies, rail line abandonments, and regulatory changes since 1975 had a large and lasting impact on the Iowa railroad network. Particularly notable are three events that occurred in Iowa during 1980:

- The bankruptcy of the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railroad
- A major retrenchment from the state by the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul & Pacific Railroad
- Passage of the Staggers Rail Act of 1980, which deregulated the railroad industry

The deregulation of the railroad industry in particular proved to be the beginning of a gradual improvement in the financial condition of the freight railroad industry, spurred largely by shedding poorly performing rail lines and taking advantage of rate flexibility. The Iowa rail network has been pruned considerably since 1975, and today the network consists of approximately 3,851 route miles.

Today's major Iowa rail carriers have been created from the consolidation of several smaller predecessor trunk lines that served the state for over a century. These carriers have strong national and international networks and are financially sound. Iowa's major rail carriers include:

- BNSF Railway (BNSF)
- Canadian National Railway (CN)
- Canadian Pacific Railway (CP)
- Kansas City Southern Railway (KCS)<sup>8</sup>
- Norfolk Southern Railway (NS)
- Union Pacific Railroad (UP)

In addition there are 12 operating short line and regional railroads in Iowa. One regional railroad and a number of short line railroads have been established largely from rail lines spun off by the major rail carriers since 1980, and these carriers continue to provide freight rail service to Iowa at the local level.

Today, the rail system in Iowa plays an essential freight transportation role both within the state and nationally. Iowa's location and position on principal rail corridors provides rail access to every region of the U.S., as well as to Canada and Mexico.

Iowa ranks in the top 15 among states in all of the following categories<sup>9</sup>:

- Total miles of rail (11th)
- Rail tons originated (12th)
- Rail carloads originated (15th)
- Rail tons carried (7th)
- Rail carloads carried (7th)

Iowa also ranks highly among all states for rail movements of many individual commodities. For commodities originating by state, Iowa ranks highly in<sup>10</sup>:

- Food products (1st)
- Chemicals (4th)
- Farm products (7th)

<sup>8</sup> Serves Iowa by haulage rights over BNSF Railway and Union Pacific Railroad and does not own any track in the state.

<sup>9</sup> Based on 2012 Association of American Railroads statistics for the U.S. and Iowa

<sup>10</sup> Based on 2012 Association of American Railroads statistics for the U.S. and Iowa

For commodities terminating in the state, Iowa ranks tenth (10th) in food products<sup>11</sup>.

Rail intercity passenger service in Iowa includes Amtrak long-distance services between Chicago and both the San Francisco Bay Area and Los Angeles in California which pass through portions of the state. However, as several of the metropolitan areas in Iowa continue to grow, the need to invest in a diverse network of passenger transportation options that will accommodate this population growth has been recognized. This growth could be accommodated via improved rail corridors providing new intercity passenger services.

In terms of potential future passenger rail service implementation, Iowa is not located on any federally designated high-speed rail corridors, but it is located on the regional intercity network proposed by the Midwest Regional Rail Initiative (MWRRI) in 1996. The proposed Iowa route connects the MWRRI hub city of Chicago with the Quad Cities of Iowa and Illinois, Iowa City, Des Moines, Council Bluffs and Omaha, Nebraska.

Iowa received federal funding to develop service plans and environmental studies for the Chicago-Iowa City segment of the MWRRI corridor in 2010 and for the full Chicago-Omaha corridor in 2013. Building on these feasibility study efforts, Iowa is using federal funds to further study the Quad Cities-Iowa City segment of the Chicago-Omaha corridor. The study is anticipated to be completed in 2016. These passenger rail planning efforts undertaken by the state will lay the groundwork for future rail passenger service in Iowa and the region.

## 1.4 Institutional Structure of Iowa's State Rail Program

### 1.4.1 Iowa Department of Transportation Rail Functions

The Iowa Department of Transportation is responsible for coordinating the overall state transportation improvement strategy. The department is primarily responsible for rail planning and project development activities, including development of this State Rail Plan. Iowa DOT's headquarters is located in Ames, Iowa.

Iowa DOT is Iowa's State Rail Transportation Authority (SRTAA) and State Rail Plan Approval Authority (SRPAA). Furthermore, Iowa is in compliance with the requirements of 49 U.S.C. §22102, which stipulates eligibility requirements for long-established FRA rail freight grant assistance program pertaining to state planning and administration.

Iowa DOT is the primary rail regulator within the state of Iowa. However, the Iowa DOT has limited regulatory authority. It participates in the railroad abandonment process and offers comment on federal rail legislation and rulemaking. When applicable, the Iowa DOT can facilitate service disputes between shippers and carriers through the Iowa Department of Inspections and Appeals.

Other areas of Iowa DOT rail involvement include long-range rail planning, including development of this State Rail Plan, and financing. Financing involves loans and grants for construction and maintenance of track, maintenance and safety improvements at grade highway-rail crossings, and developing new spur tracks to support economic development.

The following are those divisions under the jurisdiction of Iowa DOT which have existing or potential rail-related responsibilities.

#### Office of Rail Transportation

The Office of Rail Transportation has the primary responsibility for rail planning in Iowa DOT. The office administers various rail-related programs, including:

- Rail policy and legislation development
- Advocacy and communications
- Railroad Revolving Loan and Grant Program

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

- Linking Iowa's Freight Transportation System Program (LIFTS)
- Highway/railroad crossing agreements
- Crossing safety
- Surface repair
- Passenger and freight rail planning
- Track inspection

### **Office of Systems Planning**

The mission of the Office of Systems Planning is to prepare comprehensive, intermodal and modal transportation system plans for the state. These plans are used to direct transportation investments and administer statewide grant programs. The Office also maintains data and mapping related to railroads in the state. The Iowa State Rail Plan is being developed under the cooperative supervision of the offices of Systems Planning and Rail Transportation.

### **Office of Public Transit**

The Office of Public Transit administers federal and state transit grants and provides technical assistance to Iowa's 19 urban public transit systems and 16 regional public transit systems. More than 27.5 million rides are provided annually by Iowa's transit systems. Every county in Iowa is served by a regional system to ensure Iowans have transportation to work, medical facilities, meal sites, and leisure activities. This office will have a role ensuring that future intercity passenger rail services, sponsored by Iowa DOT, are coordinated with local transit.

### **Office of Right-of-Way**

The Office of Right-of-Way would have a role in the state's acquisition of right of way needed for the implementation of new intercity passenger rail services sponsored by the state of Iowa. The office has five sections related to right-of-way (ROW) design and acquisition for state transportation projects.

### **District Transportation Planners**

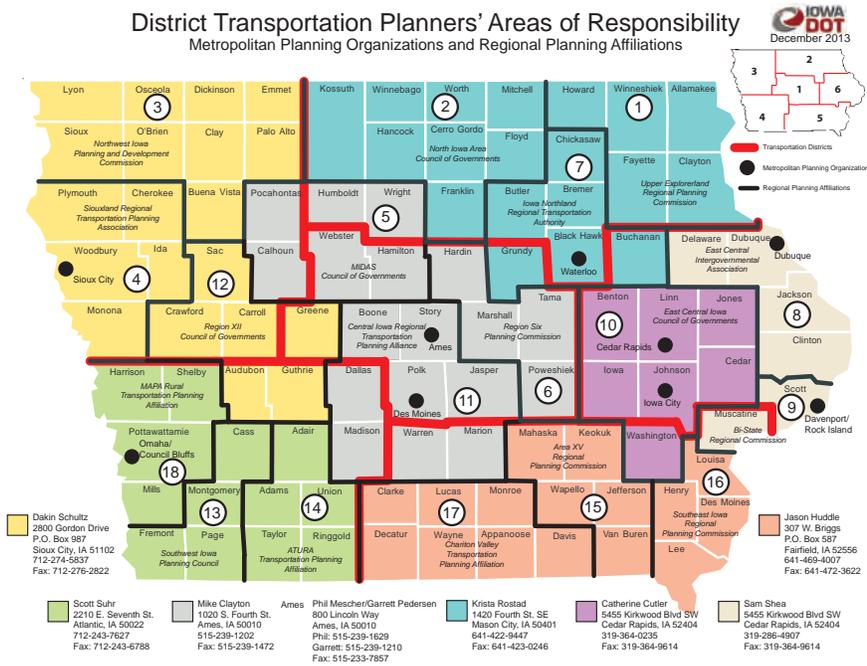
Each Iowa DOT district has a District Transportation Planner, who is involved in multimodal transportation planning at the local level. There are six Iowa DOT districts statewide, which are identified below along with the location of each district office<sup>12</sup>:

- District 1 – Ames
- District 2 – Mason City
- District 3 – Sioux City
- District 4 – Atlantic
- District 5 – Fairfield
- District 6 – Cedar Rapids

The six districts, along with the nine Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) and 18 Regional Planning Affiliations (RPAs) noted later in this section appear in Figure 1.1 below.

<sup>12</sup> [http://www.iowadot.gov/systems\\_planning/pdf/DistrictPlannersMap.pdf](http://www.iowadot.gov/systems_planning/pdf/DistrictPlannersMap.pdf)

Figure 1.1: Iowa DOT Districts, Iowa Metropolitan Planning Organizations, and Iowa Regional Planning Affiliations



Source: Iowa Department of Transportation

### 1.4.2 Other State Agencies or Initiatives Related to Rail

#### Iowa Transportation Commission

The Iowa Transportation Commission (ITC) was created for the purpose of developing comprehensive transportation policy and planning within the state of Iowa. The ITC has final approval authority on funding allocations, including the Railroad Revolving Loan and Grant Program (RRLG), federally funded highway-railroad grade crossing safety projects, and highway-railroad grade crossing surface repair projects in Iowa.

ITC membership is comprised of seven transportation commissioners, who are appointed by the Iowa Governor and confirmed by the Iowa Senate. The ITC hosts monthly meetings, with eight held in Ames and four held in various other locations around the state annually.

#### Iowa Economic Development Authority

The Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA) was created in 2011 to replace the Iowa Department of Economic Development as part of the complete overhaul of Iowa’s economic development delivery model.

IEDA’s mission is to strengthen economic and community vitality by building partnerships and leveraging resources to make Iowa the choice for people and business. Through its two main divisions — business development and community development — IEDA administers several state and federal programs to meet its goals of assisting individuals, communities, and businesses.

These agencies also provide financial assistance programs that have been utilized to assist in the attraction of new industries on the state’s rail lines through a number of initiatives including tax credits and in some instances have provided financial assistance for projects such as track rehabilitation and the construction of spur tracks to industries.

### 1.4.3 Regional and Local Organizations

Iowa's transportation agencies, besides the Iowa DOT, include Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) and Regional Planning Affiliations (RFAs). Iowa's MPOs and RFAs are identified and described in this section.

#### Metropolitan Planning Organizations

Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) are federally mandated and funded transportation policy-making organizations comprised of local government and transportation officials. The formation of an MPO is required for any urbanized area with a population greater than 50,000.

MPOs are required to maintain and continually update a Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) as well as a Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), which is a multi-year program of transportation projects to be funded with federal and other transportation funding sources. As MPO planning activities have evolved to address the movement of freight as well as passengers, they have included consideration of multimodal solutions, improved intermodal connections, and more specific rail and rail-related project solutions. MPOs must work cooperatively with area transportation stakeholders to understand and anticipate the area's travel needs and to develop the aforementioned documents.

There are nine MPOs within Iowa. These MPOs are described below.<sup>13</sup>

- Ames Area MPO (AAMPO) — Ames, Iowa
  - Serves the Ames metropolitan area in Story and Boone counties in Iowa.
- Bi-State Regional Commission — Rock Island, Illinois
  - Serves the Quad Cities metropolitan area of Iowa and Illinois, including Scott and Muscatine counties in Iowa. Major Iowa cities served include Davenport, Muscatine, and Bettendorf.
- Black Hawk Metropolitan Area Transportation Policy Board — Waterloo, Iowa
  - Serves the Waterloo / Cedar Falls metropolitan area in Black Hawk County, Iowa.
- Corridor Metropolitan Planning Organization — Cedar Rapids, Iowa
  - Serves the Cedar Rapids metropolitan area in Linn County, Iowa.
- Des Moines Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (DMAMPO) — Des Moines, Iowa
  - Serves the Des Moines metropolitan area in Polk, Dallas, and Warren counties in Iowa.
- East Central Intergovernmental Association (ECIA) — Dubuque, Iowa
  - Includes local governmental bodies in Cedar, Clinton, Delaware, Dubuque, and Jackson counties in eastern Iowa. Major cities served include Dubuque and Clinton.
- Metropolitan Planning Organization of Johnson County (MPOJC) — Iowa City, Iowa
  - Serves Johnson County, Iowa, including the cities of Iowa City and Coralville.
- Siouxland Interstate Metropolitan Planning Council (SIMPCO) — Sioux City, Iowa
  - Includes the Sioux City metropolitan area of Iowa, Nebraska, and South Dakota, including Sioux City and surrounding cities in Woodbury County, Iowa.
- Omaha-Council Bluffs Metropolitan Area Planning Agency (MAPA) — Omaha, Nebraska
  - Includes the Omaha-Council Bluffs metropolitan area of Iowa and Nebraska, including Council Bluffs in Pottawattamie County, Iowa.

The nine MPOs noted above appear earlier in this chapter, in Figure 1.1.

#### Regional Planning Affiliations

Regional Planning Affiliations (RFAs) are responsible for transportation planning in regions of Iowa outside the metropolitan areas represented by MPOs. Iowa has 18 RFAs<sup>14</sup>, which are identified below:

- RPA 1: Upper Explorerland Regional Planning Commission
  - Serves Howard, Winneshiek, Allamakee, Fayette, and Clayton counties.
- RPA 2: North Iowa Area Council of Governments

<sup>13</sup> <https://planning.dot.gov/mpo.asp>

<sup>14</sup> [http://www.iowadot.gov/systems\\_planning/pdf/DistrictPlannersMap.pdf](http://www.iowadot.gov/systems_planning/pdf/DistrictPlannersMap.pdf)

- Serves Kossuth, Winnebago, Worth, Mitchell, Hancock, Cerro Gordo, Floyd, and Franklin counties.
- RPA 3: Northwest Iowa Planning and Development Commission
  - Serves Lyon, Osceola, Dickinson, Emmet, Sioux, O'Brien, Clay, Palo Alto, and Buena Vista counties.
- RPA 4: Siouxland Regional Transportation Planning Association
  - Serves Plymouth, Cherokee, Woodbury, Ida, and Monona counties.
- RPA 5: MIDAS Council of Governments
  - Serves Pocahontas, Humboldt, Wright, Calhoun, Webster, and Hamilton counties.
- RPA 6: Region Six Planning Commission
  - Serves Hardin, Marshall, Tama, and Poweshiek counties.
- RPA 7: Iowa Northland Regional Transportation Authority
  - Serves Chickasaw, Butler, Bremer, Grundy, Black Hawk, and Buchanan counties.
- RPA 8: East Central Intergovernmental Association
  - Serves Delaware, Dubuque, Jackson, and Clinton counties.
- RPA 9: Bi-State Regional Planning Commission
  - Serves Scott and Muscatine counties.
- RPA 10: East Central Iowa Council of Governments
  - Benton, Linn, Jones, Iowa, Johnson, Cedar, and Washington counties.
- RPA 11: Central Iowa Regional Transportation Planning Alliance
  - Serves Boone, Story, Dallas, Polk, Jasper, Madison, Warren, and Marion counties.
- RPA 12: Region XII Council of Governments
  - Serves Sac, Crawford, Carroll, Greene, Audubon, and Guthrie counties.
- RPA 13: Southwest Iowa Planning Council
  - Serves Cass, Montgomery, Fremont, and Page counties.
- RPA 14: ATURA Transportation Planning Affiliation
  - Serves Adair, Adams, Union, Taylor, and Ringgold counties.
- RPA 15: Area XV Regional Planning Commission
  - Serves Mahaska, Keokuk, Wapello, Jefferson, and Van Buren counties.
- RPA 16: Southeast Iowa Regional Planning Commission
  - Serves Louisa, Henry, Des Moines, and Lee counties.
- RPA 17: Chariton Valley Planning and Development
  - Serves Clarke, Lucas, Monroe, Decatur, Wayne, Appanoose, and Davis counties.
- RPA 18: MAPA Rural Transportation Planning Affiliation
  - Serves Harrison, Shelby, Pottawattamie, and Mills counties.

The 18 RPAs noted above appear earlier in this chapter, in Figure 1.1.

### Local Economic Development Agencies

Iowa has a number of local public and private economic development agencies which recruit industries and businesses on the basis of their location, available labor force, room for growth, and access to rail and other transportation assets.

The Iowa Directory of Economic Development Organizations lists 61 entities around the state, including economic development agencies and authorities, chambers of commerce, alliances, development councils, corporations, associations, and marketing coalitions at the regional, county or local level of government.<sup>15</sup> Many of these agencies offer incentives such as tax exemptions and credits and other means of assistance to attract business interests.

Although these agencies do not generally work directly with freight railroad operators, they do have a vested interest in the level of rail services and rail assistance programs available to supplement their incentives.

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.gdi-solutions.com/directory/edo/iowa.htm>

## 1.5 Iowa's Authority to Conduct Rail Planning and Investment

### 1.5.1 State Authority for Rail Planning

The Iowa Code, Title VIII (Transportation) Chapter 307 assigns powers to Iowa DOT to plan and implement transportation system improvements. Iowa DOT's rail-related responsibilities per the Iowa Code are detailed in Iowa Code §307.26. These include the following:

1. Conducting research on basic railroad problems and identification of present capability of railroads to provide acceptable levels of service.
2. Development of rail transportation systems for expansion of passenger and freight services.
3. Development of programs in anticipation of railroad abandonment.
4. Development and maintenance of a federal-state relationship of programs relating to railroad safety enforcement, track standards, rail equipment, operating rules, and transportation of hazardous materials.
5. Conducting research on railroad-highway grade crossings and development of a safety program in order to reduce injuries or fatalities.
6. Applying for, accepting, and expending federal, state, or private funds for the improvement of rail transportation.
7. Studies for coordination of railway service with that of other transportation modes.
8. Studies of regulatory changes deemed necessary to effectuate economical and efficient railroad service.
9. Provision of advice and assistance regarding agreements with railroads for the restoration, conservation, or improvement of railroads.
10. Administration of various responsibilities including: supervision and regulation of rail carriers, railway corporations – powers, construction and operations of railways, railroad rights-of-way, crossings, tracks and fencing, and railway assistance, per Title VIII §327C through H.
11. Performing other duties and responsibilities as may be assigned by the Iowa DOT Director and the Iowa Transportation Commission (ITC).
12. Advising and assisting in the establishment and development of railroad districts upon request.
13. Conducting innovative experimental programs relating to rail transportation problems within the state.
14. Performance of the role of "applicant" pursuant to the Railroad Revitalization and Regulatory Reform Act of 1976.
15. Identification of those segments of railroad trackage, which, if improved, may provide increased transportation services for Iowans.

### 1.5.2 State Authority for Grant, Loan, and Other Rail Financing

Iowa has utilized both federal and state transportation funding programs when rail infrastructure improvements were eligible and appropriate. State-sponsored rail investment in Iowa has been provided through Iowa DOT and other state economic development agencies.

Title VIII Chapter 327H of the Iowa Code allows Iowa DOT to administer a Railroad Revolving Loan and Grant Program (RRLG) for the following purposes:

- To provide assistance for the restoration, conservation, improvement, and construction of railroad main lines, branch lines, switching yards, sidings, rail connections, intermodal yards, highway grade separations, and other rail-related improvements.
- For rail economic development projects that improve rail facilities, including the construction of branch lines, sidings, rail connections, intermodal yards, and other rail-related improvements that spur economic development and job growth.

Title VIII Chapter 327J of the Iowa Code created a Passenger Rail Service Revolving Fund to be used to pay the costs associated with the initiation, operation, and maintenance of passenger rail service.

Other state-sponsored rail investment programs include:

- Highway-Railroad Grade Crossing Safety Program — This federally funded program provides financial assistance to states for safety improvements at highway-railroad crossings.
- Grade Crossing Safety Program — This state-funded program assists railroads with funding to defray a portion of the signal maintenance costs at signals installed under the Highway-Railroad Grade Crossing Safety Program since 1973.
- Highway-Railroad Grade Crossing Surface Repair Program — This state-funded program is designed to assist city and county highway authorities and railroads with surface improvements at highway-railroad crossings.
- Primary Road Highway-Railroad Grade Crossing Repair Program — This state-funded program is designed to assist with surface improvements at highway-railroad crossings on the Primary Road System.

In addition, Iowa DOT has begun a new grant funding opportunity to improve Iowa's freight transportation. The Linking Iowa's Freight Transportation System Program (LIFTS) seeks to address gaps in multimodal funding to assist in bolstering the freight transportation system. LIFTS grant funding is not limited to a particular mode of transportation, but is designed to assist projects that contribute to effective and efficient freight transportation in the state. Examples of projects could include rail-served transload facilities and increasing a facility's capacity or access to rail service.

Additional details on these rail and rail safety related funding programs appear in Chapter 2 of the State Rail Plan.

### 1.5.3 State Funding for Rail Projects in the Last Five Years

Recent year funding totals under the four aforementioned state rail improvement programs are as follows:

- Between 2009 and 2013, under the Railroad Revolving Loan and Grant Program, Iowa has awarded \$12.4 million in loans and \$14.3 million in grants for rail projects involving job creation and/or rail network improvement, and for planning studies.
- Between 2013 and 2014, under the Highway-Railroad Grade Crossing Safety Program, Iowa awarded \$10.2 million in improvements. According to the DOT, the annual federal appropriation for the program is about \$4.9 million per year.
- Between 2014 and 2015, under the Highway-Railroad Grade Crossing Surface Repair Program, Iowa awarded \$2,162,000 in improvements, or about \$1 million per year.
- The Primary Road Highway-Railroad Grade Crossing Repair Program has an annual funding level ranging between \$300,000 and \$600,000, depending on needs.

## 1.6 Summary of Freight and Passenger Rail Services in Iowa

### 1.6.1 Existing Rail System

The rail system in Iowa is comprised of approximately 3,851 route miles owned by freight railroads and non-operating railroad owners. There are 18 freight railroads in the state. Six of these railroads — BNSF Railway (BNSF), Canadian National Railway (CN), Canadian Pacific Railway (CP), Kansas City Southern Railway (KCS), Norfolk Southern Railway (NS), and Union Pacific Railroad (UP) — are categorized as Class I or major railroads. These carriers own a total of approximately 3,225 route miles, or about 83.74 percent of the total rail mileage in the state. Twelve of these railroads are categorized as a Class II railroad (known also as a regional railroad) or a Class III railroad (known also as a short line railroad). Regional and short line railroads own a total of 563 route miles, or about 14.62 percent of the total rail mileage in the state. Two non-operating railroad owners own 63 route miles, or about 1.64 percent of the total rail mileage in the state. Non-operating railroad owners have agreements with other rail carriers to operate the trackage they own. In 2013, the state's freight railroads carried 290.3 million tons of freight, or 4.5 million rail carloads of various commodities, to, from, within and through Iowa<sup>16</sup>. The state's freight railroads and non-operating railroad owners and their respective networks in Iowa will be identified and described in detail in Chapter 2 of the Iowa State Rail Plan.

<sup>16</sup> Surface Transportation Board 2013 Waybill Sample for Iowa

Two Amtrak long-distance intercity rail passenger routes operate within the state. Amtrak's *California Zephyr* and *Southwest Chief* routes' eastern terminus is Chicago with termini in the San Francisco Bay Area and Los Angeles, respectively. Both of the services operate over BNSF Railway in Iowa. During Amtrak's 2014 Fiscal Year, a total of 57,238 passengers boarded or alighted at the six Amtrak stations in Iowa. Boardings and alightings at individual stations ranged from 4,300 to 14,000 in the year, and the busiest station was Osceola, just south of Des Moines.

In addition to the state's freight and intercity passenger rail services, two tourist railroads operate in the state: the Boone & Scenic Valley Railroad in Boone and the Midwest Central Railroad in Mount Pleasant. The Union Pacific Railroad Museum in Council Bluffs houses one of the oldest and largest corporate collections of railroad artifacts, photographs, and documents in the U.S. Some other railroad museums in Iowa include the James H. Andrew Railroad Museum and History Center in Boone, Siouxland Historic Railroad Association Railroad Shops in Sioux City, Manly Junction Railroad Museum in Manly, and the Hub City Heritage Corporation Museum in Oelwein.

Iowa's rail network, as well as its contributions and impacts on the state, are described in greater detail in Chapter 2 of the State Rail Plan.

## 1.6.2 Rail Initiatives and Plans

### Freight Rail Initiatives

There are various freight rail initiatives Iowa DOT has considered. Iowa DOT has studied the potential for optimizing the state's freight rail network and to identify investments in the state's rail infrastructure that improve the capacity, efficiency, and safety of the state's rail network, promote railroad access and economic development, and bolster connectivity with other transportation modes. Some of these initiatives include:

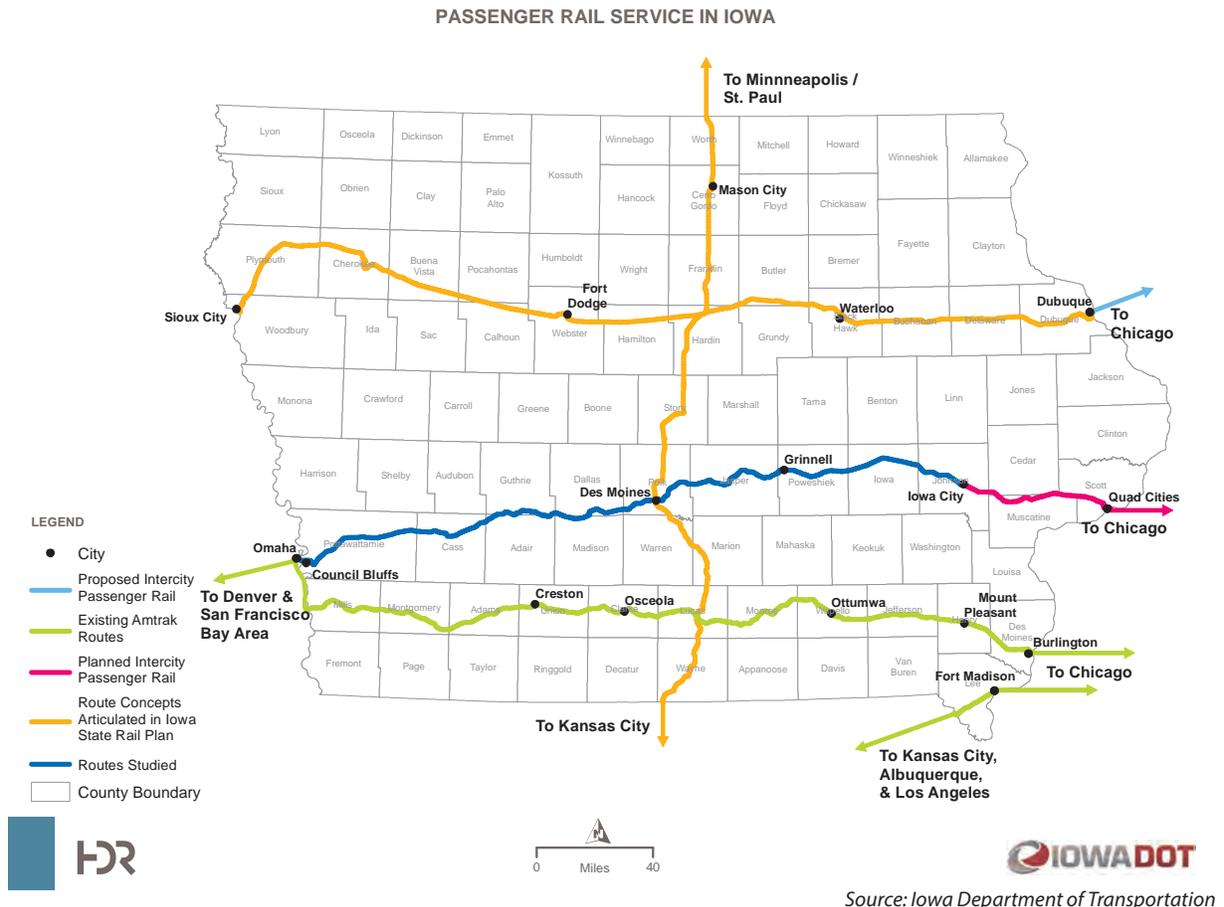
- Enhancing coordination between Iowa DOT and the state's freight railroads
- Increasing maximum allowable gross weights to 286,000 lbs. per car
- Advancing at-grade highway/rail crossing surface and signal improvements
- Expanding rail access and development of industrial spur tracks
- Promoting rail safety
- Leading freight rail studies

These and other freight rail initiatives are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4 of the State Rail Plan.

### Passenger Rail Initiatives

There are various passenger rail initiatives under consideration by Iowa DOT. Planned intercity services include new passenger trains between Chicago and Iowa City, using the Iowa Interstate Railroad in Iowa, and between Chicago and Dubuque, using the Canadian National Railway in Iowa. Furthermore, Iowa DOT is studying the extension of the Chicago-Iowa City service from Iowa City west to Des Moines and Council Bluffs/Omaha. Other routes that may be studied include the extension of a Chicago-Dubuque service west to Waterloo/Cedar Falls, Fort Dodge, Cherokee, and Sioux City, as well as a north-south service between the Minneapolis, Des Moines, and Kansas City on the Union Pacific Railroad. These future intercity passenger rail routes, as well as existing passenger rail routes, are noted in Figure 2.2 below.

Figure 2.2: Existing and Potential Passenger Rail Routes Serving Iowa



In addition, two potential commuter rail services have been studied in the recent past or are currently under study. These pertain to the Iowa City-Cedar Rapids area and to the Des Moines area.

These and other intercity and commuter rail service concepts are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3 of the State Rail Plan.



 **IOWA DOT**

