

# INSTRUCTIONAL MEMORANDUMS

## To Local Public Agencies



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| To: Counties and Cities    | Date: April 24, 2018 |
| From: Local Systems Bureau | I.M. No. 3.400       |
| Subject: Preliminary Plans |                      |

**Contents:** This Instructional Memorandum (I.M.) includes guidelines and procedures for preparation, submittal, and review of preliminary plans for Local Public Agency (LPA) Federal-aid projects and certain State-aid projects that will be let by the Iowa Department of Transportation (Iowa DOT). This I.M. also includes the following attachments:

- [Attachment A](#) – Preliminary Plan Guidelines
- [Attachment B](#) – Preliminary Plan Checklist ([Word](#))
- [Attachment C](#) – Preliminary Plan Process Flowchart

### Notes:

- If the project involves a bridge or culvert, refer also to [I.M. 3.500](#), Bridge or Culvert Plans. Refer to [I.M. 3.010](#), Project Development Submittal Dates and Information, for more information.
- Preliminary plan reviews are required for State-aid projects that include improvements that will be maintained by the Iowa DOT.
- Preliminary plan reviews are not required for the following:
  - State-aid projects that do not include improvements that will be maintained by the Iowa DOT, unless otherwise specified in the project agreement.
  - Projects funded with only Federal-aid Swap, Farm-to-Market, or local funds.However, if requested by the LPA, preliminary plans for such projects will be reviewed in accordance with the guidelines set forth in this I.M.

## Preparation

### Content and Format

Preliminary plans shall be prepared in accordance with [Attachment A](#), Preliminary Plan Guidelines, and [Attachment B](#), Preliminary Plan Checklist. [Attachment A](#) provides general guidelines and instructions applicable for all types of projects. [Attachment B](#) provides a checklist of specific items that will be reviewed by the Iowa DOT Administering Bureau. The Iowa DOT strongly recommends that the LPA or its consultant use both these attachments to perform an internal plan review prior to submitting the project plans to the Iowa DOT.

### Design Guidelines

For new or complete reconstruction projects, refer to either the Iowa Statewide Urban Design and Specifications (SUDAS) [Design Manual](#), Chapter 5, for urban design guidance, or [I.M. 3.210](#), Rural Design Guidelines. For Resurfacing, Restoration, or Rehabilitation (3R) projects, refer to [I.M. 3.220](#), 3R Guidelines.

Federal-aid projects that do not meet these guidelines will require a design exception. If the need for a design exception has been identified at the preliminary plan stage, the design exception request and supporting documentation should be submitted with the preliminary plans. For more information, refer to [I.M. 3.260](#), Design Exception Process.

Even though the Iowa DOT does not review design criteria for projects funded with only Federal-aid Swap, Farm-to-Market, or local funds; the Iowa DOT strongly recommends that LPAs properly document any design features that do not meet the current applicable AASHTO design guidelines.

## Submittals

Timely submission of preliminary plans is important. Electronic submittals are required. All submittals shall be made to the Administering Bureau in accordance with [I.M. 3.010](#), Project Development Submittal Dates and Information. LPAs are strongly encouraged to use the Transportation Program Management System (TPMS), Development module, for all project submittals and correspondence. Submittals shall include the following items, as applicable:

- A transmittal letter, memo, or e-mail, including the following information:\*

  - The project number, location, and proposed letting date.
  - Identification of all changes from the previously approved project Concept Statement, if any.
  - Whether or not a hydraulic review is being requested, as per [I.M. 3.500](#), Bridge or Culvert Plans.
  - Whether or not the project may involve work within the right-of-way of an Interstate or Primary highway.
  - Whether or not the project may require acquisition of property rights.

\* If the TPMS Development submittal tool is used, information that is already available in TPMS Development does not need to be repeated in the transmittal e-mail.

- Preliminary Plans.
- A completed Preliminary Plan Checklist, as per [Attachment B](#) (use of the checklist is encouraged, but not required).
- Design exception documentation, if required as per the SUDAS [Design Manual](#), Chapter 5, for urban design guidance, or [I.M. 3.210](#), Rural Design Guidelines.

## Utility Coordination

In addition to submitting preliminary plans to the Iowa DOT, preliminary plans should also be submitted to all utilities within the project limits or corridor. For more information, refer to [I.M. 3.640](#), Utility Accommodation and Coordination.

## Review

Plans submitted in conformance with this I.M. should be returned by the Administering Bureau in a timely manner with relatively few comments. If the plans do not conform to these guidelines, the review process will require more time and effort by the LPA and the Iowa DOT, which could delay the project letting.

The process for submittal, distribution, and review of project plans is illustrated in [Attachment C](#), Preliminary Plan Process Flowchart. As the flowchart shows, if the project involves bridge or culvert that requires a hydraulic review, or requires work on an Interstate or Primary highway, the plans will need additional reviews by other Iowa DOT offices. Because these reviews may require additional time, early submittal of such plans is strongly encouraged.

After the Administering Bureau has provided comments to the LPA, a field review may be conducted, if requested by either party. Any additional comments from the Administering Bureau shall be sent in writing to the LPA after the review, and the LPA shall provide a written response to those comments. The LPA may provide a separate response or include the response as part of the Check Plan submittal.

Note: Federal-aid projects may not proceed to final design or acquire right-of-way with Federal funds until after FHWA Environmental Concurrence has been received. For more information, refer to Sections 4.1, 5.1, and 6.1 of the [Federal-aid Project Development Guide](#).