



Iowa Freight Advisory Council

Friday, June 5, 2026; 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM

IDR Alcohol & Tax Operations Warehouse

1918 SE Hulsizer Dr, Ankeny, IA 50021

Time	Topic	Presenter
10:00 AM	Safety Briefing	Tammy Nicholson Iowa DOT
10:05 AM	Welcome & Introductions	Marty Wadle Ruan
10:30 AM	Iowa DOT Update Update on the status of the State Freight Plan and grade crossing safety efforts	Caleb Whitehouse Maria Hobbs Iowa DOT
10:35 AM	MAPA Freight Plan Input	Jim Boerner MAPA
11:00 AM	Tour: IDR Alcohol & Tax Operations Warehouse	
12:00 PM	Adjourn	

Future meetings:

1. **Thursday** September 24, 2026; Cedar Rapids (tentative)
2. **Thursday** December 3, 2026; Ankeny

Wi-Fi: MarriottBonvoy_Conference

Password: courtyard

Contact person: Caleb Whitehouse, Iowa DOT Systems Planning Bureau, caleb.whitehouse@iowadot.us

"MAKING LIVES BETTER THROUGH TRANSPORTATION"



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Friday, June 5, 2026; 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM
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Safety Briefing

Amanda Martin completed a safety briefing to kick off the meeting.

Welcome/Introductions

Joe McConnell shared that he has drivers talking about retiring and will be looking to hire more drivers in the near future to replace them.

Mark White mentioned how the war in Iran is a detriment to agriculture, fuel, and grain prices. He thinks farmers will be feeling the stress of the economy if things don't change. He added that the crops are looking good this year and hopes that the higher yields will be able to offset some of the negative economic impacts.

Jodi Stevenson started off by mentioning that they work for Motis. She brought up the new carrier registration system that has been experiencing IT issues. She also brought up the fact that we are in the last funding year of the current transportation bill, which ends in September, and that they will be watching for what the new bill will look like from congress. She also brought up the new English language proficiency policy for CDL drivers and how that has impacted their CDL schools. She also said that she is seeing that some CDL schools are not resuming non domicile CDLs.

Ryan Brauer briefly mentioned a freight project his organization is working on, the Merrill Rail Crossing Study.

Jim Glaspie stated that RRLG applications are being received and applications are open until July.

James Niffenegger quickly referenced the instability in agricultural markets such as grain fertilizer and fuel. He said his organization is approaching the markets on a day-by-day basis and not looking long term now.

Janet Slavick said she works for the Des Moines MPO and is working on wrapping up work on their freight plan.

Zach James said he is with the Southeast Iowa Planning Commission. He told the group that they have submitted three RISE grants recently. He also briefly mentioned current projects they are working on including the expansion of a dock on Mississippi river north of Keokuk, Iowa and the Highways 61 expansion project.

Jackson Doud briefly mentioned his organization is watching for the E-15 federal push.

Tom Heinold shared that last winter the Army Corps of Engineers opened lock and dam 19 on schedule. He said currently they are focused on dredging activities in the Mississippi River, but that those efforts rely on rain and that more rainwater needs to get to the river or they will have a dredging problem. He also shared that they are working with Mid-American ports to connect roads and bridges to the river to get goods out of the state.

Matt Dickinson says he works in the warehouse industry, uptick in diesel fuel pricing and lack of long-haul driver availability has led to clients wanting to ship by rail and says this is good for them.

Mary Klemersud is a Program Planner in the Environmental Service Division and works with bottle deposit law.

Delia Moon-Meier says she is dealing with travelers and trucks.

Ray Gasser is serving as chairman of the Iowa Transportation Commission. He said the focus this month will be approving the next 5-year plan. He adds that the DOT did well on managing the budget last year and was able to save money and are now looking at recommending several small projects around the state with the extra money. He shared he is a farmer in southwest Iowa and the president and chair of the American Soybean Association. He says the associations have focused a lot on regulation issues and non-tariff barriers.

Jess Sargent shared that in April her organization launched a new ERP system. She also mentioned that fuel prices have been a challenge in getting steel in the country.

Frank Husemen re-iterated what others have already stated such as fuel, commodity, and retail prices becoming a concern. He said that the world trade system works together and needs to work together.

Jully Kenny simply added emphasis to comments on the economy that other attendees have already addressed.

Gabe Claypool said that he works at a rail served industrial park. He added that the fuel prices have been a good thing for them but would like to see normalcy come back to the market.

Maria Hobbs shared that her work is currently focused on the UP-NS merger.

Garret Pedersen shared that the DOT is required to report to the legislature every 5 years on the road use tax fund and that they are currently working on a study to give the legislature to review. He is hoping the report will be wrapped up this summer and submitted in December.

Tammy Nicholson shared that there is new funding available for railroad grade separation, \$25 million over 5 years. They are working on developing what the program will look like and that cities will be able to apply for this funding. She adds that rail safety is on their minds due to the recent Iowa 21 rail crash this week. She finished by emphasizing to the attendees to pay attention at rail crossings and yield to the trains.

Dr. Haozhe Chen is a professor from ISU. He mentioned that in recent years there has been an enrollment cliff and that lots of universities have been struggling with enrollment, but that ISU is expecting strong enrollment this fall. Referencing that the College of Business hit record enrollment this year. He shared that their supply chain major has more than 500 students and 2 weeks ago they had 100 students graduate. He added that their placement rate after graduation has remained very high. Within 6 months of graduating 97% of students either find a job or go to grad school with 94% finding a job.

Doug Martin works for Amazon and shared that he recently went to a conference where they talked about speed and automation and how that impacts Iowa when warehouses move into smaller building types that are more geared towards same day shipping. The idea is to target getting home goods to you faster.

Charlie Purcell shared that he is the new director of the Transportation Development Division. Currently he is waiting and watching closely for the next federal reauthorization. Soon he will be presenting the next 5-year program to the Iowa Transportation Commission. He added that this new program will have a heavy emphasis on stewardship. He finished by saying he will be attending a Mid America Port Commission meeting in July.

Sean Litteral works for the FHWA. He talked briefly about discretionary grants. He added that their relationship with the states is going well. He finished by telling the attendees that the National Freight Strategic Plan was released by the US DOT.

Marty Wadle said that there is a shift in the trucking industry towards non domicile CDL and brought up fuel price concerns. He told the group that the Supreme Court recently made a ruling on chameleon carrier issues, meaning that brokers can no longer hire an unsafe driver. He is worried that this will drive capacity out of the trucking market and to rail. He said spot rates are at record highs. He said capacity will be a challenge, trucking rates will stay high, and this will only increase movement to rail. He finished by saying they will need more drivers and finding those drivers will be a challenge.

Iowa DOT Update

Contact person: Caleb Whitehouse, Iowa DOT Systems Planning Bureau, caleb.whitehouse@iowadot.us

"MAKING LIVES BETTER THROUGH TRANSPORTATION"

Caleb Whitehouse began the update by reminding the group that the State Freight Plan was submitted on May 1st, with a due date of August 18th. The date he expects to hear back from the FHWA on the review of the plan is around the end of July. He then handed off presenting to Martin for the Rail Crossing Update.

Rail Crossing Update

Martin opened by addressing the recent Iowa Interstate derailment, emphasizing that rail safety remains a critical concern at both the state and national level. She noted that a 14-year-old child lost their life in the incident. Martin stressed that even when signals are malfunctioning, individuals should still look both ways before crossing. Drawing on her own background growing up in a rural area with many un-signalized crossings, she shared a personal anecdote about nearly missing an oncoming train while driving over a crossing without paying adequate attention.

Martin reported that she has been actively working on agricultural spring planting campaigns and noted an observed increase in incidents involving agricultural semi-trucks being struck at crossings.

Martin provided the following updates on recent activities and initiatives:

- GTS Conference: Martin attended the Government Traffic Safety Bureau's GTS Conference.
- ENS Phone Board Signs: Signs have been distributed to partners. Martin noted upcoming meetings with Homeland Security, at which ENS signs will also be provided.
- Grant Applications: Two grant applications have been submitted focused on rail safety along the Amtrak corridor. Martin is currently in communication with counties along that corridor, with the goal of conducting a robust analysis of safety conditions and rail trespassing incidents.
- Merrill Overpass Project: Phase 1 is complete. Martin indicated she is applying for the next phase of funding, with the hope of constructing an overpass.

Additional Updates

Purcell raised an additional grant opportunity, noting that the INFRA program funding has been released. There are plans to apply for the grant, which would be used to update and modernize rest areas and expand truck parking capacity along targeted corridors. Purcell noted that the INFRA program dedicates \$200 million per year specifically for truck parking, and that the I-80 corridor will be the primary target. If the grant is received, it is expected to accelerate existing projects.

Discussion

A member raised a question regarding the feasibility of completing bridge and tunnel projects given their high costs. Nicholson responded that the program is being structured in partnership with Local Systems Bureau staff who have existing knowledge of bridges and county infrastructure, with the goal of maximizing the benefit of available funding. She noted that cities and counties have access to other funding sources that could be combined with grant funding to increase overall impact.

Nicholson acknowledged that each bridge presents unique considerations and that the number of train crossings varies by location. While a member noted that the available funding represents a small start, Nicholson affirmed that it is a meaningful start, nonetheless. She indicated that a notice of funding availability is expected to be released by the end of the year. She noted that two-lane bridges typically run in the range of \$4–5 million, and that the program hopes to fund the construction of several bridges. She also clarified that crossing consolidation decisions remain under the authority of local governments.

MAPA Freight Plan Input

Boerner opened by acknowledging that he was the final item on the agenda and committed to being mindful of time. He noted that MAPA has recently begun working on federal performance measures for their freight plan.

Boerner provided background on MAPA, describing it as a six-county Council of Governments established in 1962 serving the Omaha metropolitan area. MAPA's work spans community development, economic development, and disaster planning. Boerner explained that MAPA facilitates comprehensive, cooperative transportation planning, including the metropolitan

transportation plan and the transportation improvement program. He noted that while the area was historically more rural, it is experiencing rapid urban growth, prompting increased interest in understanding the shift from trucking to rail and planning accordingly.

Boerner acknowledged that MAPA received a significant volume of data for their freight plan and is currently focused on learning how to use it effectively. He referenced the Transformative Regional Investment Prioritization System (TRIPS), a collaborative effort with Nebraska DOT aimed at understanding how transportation investments impact Nebraska and identifying available funding mechanisms. He also noted that aging infrastructure is a key concern, and that MAPA intends to draw on the Iowa DOT model as a reference for updating their travel demand model.

Regional Freight Plan

Boerner outlined the goals of MAPA's regional freight plan, emphasizing the importance of maintaining data consistency across state lines. Project selection was identified as a central component of the plan, with the aim of producing actionable strategies, policies, and programs. He noted that national freight data is drawn from the Freight Analysis Framework, which has been disaggregated to the MPO level for Iowa, though limited funding and time prevented disaggregation to the county level. Through this work, MAPA has identified critical urban and rural freight corridors, which Boerner noted is significant for making federal funding available. Flood planning was also cited as an important consideration.

Boerner acknowledged that while MAPA has a comprehensive safety action plan in place, freight-specific safety remains an area that needs further development. He indicated that the plan is expected to be completed by March of the following year. Outreach has recently concluded with additional engagement planned with the Iowa DOT and the Iowa State Patrol the following week.

Boerner presented data on current freight flows and projections through 2050, illustrating anticipated growth. A more granular breakdown by transportation mode showed that trucking and rail are both expected to grow, while pipeline is projected to grow significantly by 2050. An audience member noted that inbound freight is projected to double by 2050 while outbound does not reflect the same growth and asked whether that disparity is attributable to pipeline projections. Boerner confirmed that assessment. Key commodities showing growth by mode included natural sands, cereal grains, nonmetallic minerals, agricultural products, and gravel.

An audience member asked whether the analysis accounted for river transportation in addition to road and rail. Boerner indicated that MAPA is working with the Army Corps of Engineers to obtain that data and expressed interest in better understanding traffic on the Missouri River and any future projects associated with it.

Boerner then presented findings on truck bottlenecks, noting that speed limit analysis may misidentify where road problems are. He explained that high volumes of speeding can mask the true nature of a bottleneck and pointed out that this data can highlight locations where crashes have not yet occurred, but where proactive attention is warranted. He also presented data on truck-involved collisions, noting that truck volume and collision data are closely correlated, and that the longer stopping distances required by heavy vehicles underscore the need to find ways to improve safety at these locations.

Boerner outlined the plan's upcoming milestones: a metro freight profile presentation and input session is anticipated for September, a strategy showcase is planned for December to gather additional feedback, and the finalized plan is expected in March with a further opportunity for input at that time.

Questions and Discussion

An audience member asked about the origins of the TRIPS system. Boerner explained that TRIPS is intended to encompass all funding in their area, with the goal of cataloging projects across the region so that funding can be more appropriately assigned based on project type.

Grasser raised the issue of Highways 34 and 31 south of Omaha, suggesting that as the city grows southward, those routes could see significantly increased traffic and may become bottleneck areas. Boerner responded that MAPA is in the process of identifying expressway projects intended to address those concerns.

Litteral suggested that charts showing projected trends would benefit from the inclusion of historical trend data as a point of comparison. Boerner welcomed the feedback and expressed interest in being able to show how past projections compared against actual outcomes. He noted that the Freight Analysis Framework tool has limitations in this regard.

Nicholson indicated that if anyone at MAPA is engaged in issues related to the Union Pacific and Norfolk Southern merger, they should reach out to her for assistance. Boerner noted that there is a specific area within their MPO where residents could experience extended delays due to train traffic if freight volumes increase.

An individual raised the topic of marine traffic, referencing an ongoing study of the lower Missouri River sponsored by Missouri DOT and Port KC. They encouraged Iowa to engage with the study and expressed concern that it may be at risk of being sidelined. The individual noted that the study examines the full potential of the Missouri River, including commerce, water irrigation, and hydropower, and emphasized that halting the study would limit the river's utilization.

Gasser added that federal stakeholders have been looking at increasing traffic on the Missouri River and suggested that interest in the area is growing.

Whitehouse clarified that the lower Missouri River study covers the stretch from Sioux City southward, with the current focus running from Kansas City to St. Louis.

An individual raised concerns about poor snowmelt conditions leading to lower water drafts, reduced navigation potential, and diminished hydropower capacity. They posed the question of how these conditions tie into the work of both MAPA and SIMPCO.

Tour: IDR Alcohol & Tax Operations Warehouse

Prior to the group adjourning for a tour of the warehouse, Wadle provided background information on the facility. He explained that the building is owned by the Iowa Department of Revenue (IDR) and that Ruan equipment is housed within it. Wadle outlined the process by which the facility operates, including how liquor is processed and distributed across the state. He noted that drivers have numerous stops and layovers, and that delivery coverage extends statewide. He added that 17 other states operate under a similar model, in which all liquor flows into a single facility, and that Iowa is distinctive in that warehousing and distribution occur within the same building. He clarified that the facility handles spirits only, with no wine or beer.

Whitehouse asked whether beer and wine are controlled under Iowa law but handled at a separate facility. Wadle said he was unsure of how beer or wine is handled by the State. Wadle explained that all products coming into this building are taxed at 50% and that approximately \$140 million is returned to the general fund, though he noted he was uncertain about the specific tax treatment of beer and wine.

Wadle provided additional context on the contractual relationship with the state, noting that the arrangement began as a six-year agreement and is currently in its first two-year extension, which they are hopeful will continue. He noted that for safety reasons, the fact that their trucks are transporting liquor is not advertised on their vehicles.

Nicholson asked whether all liquor arrives at the facility by truck. Wadle confirmed that it does, explaining that the facility has no rail spurs to accommodate other modes of transportation. When asked whether international liquor also comes into this building, Wadle confirmed that it does. He also noted that the facility does not deliver directly to restaurants, which are required to purchase through a separate provider.

A member asked about product loss due to damage. Wadle indicated that shrinkage is very minimal and noted that an old conveyor system that had previously caused damage was removed.

A member asked whether Ruan handles inbound shipments as well. Wadle clarified that they do not and explained that the warehouse provides free storage for manufacturers until their product is purchased.

A member asked whether it is the state or the end buyer that purchases the product. Wadle explained that the state purchases based on anticipated demand, but that if a buyer wants a specific bottle that the state has not stocked, they will need to place a special order. He further clarified that technically the state never takes ownership of the product – the producer retains ownership of all products held in the building until it is purchased by a store.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned for the tour led by Wadle and other Ruan employees.

For more information or access to presentation slides please reach out to Caleb Whitehouse at caleb.whitehouse@iowadot.us

Attendance

Members

Present	Name	Representing
	Jilian Walsh (Chair)	Travero
X	Dr. Haozhe Chen	ISU Supply Chain Management
X	Gabe Claypool	Des Moines Industrial
X	Greg Dickinson	Ten D, Inc. Companies/Merchants Distribution Service
X	Jackson Doud	Iowa Farm Bureau
	Bob Elkins	Decker Truck Lines
X	Frank Huseman	NEW Cooperative/Port of Blencoe
	Matthew Leyser	John Deere Des Moines Works
	Ryan Nonnemaker	CPKC Railroad
X	Doug Martin	Amazon DSM5
X	Joe McConnell	Perishable Distributors of Iowa
X	Delia Moon-Meier	Iowa 80 Group
X	James Niffenegger	Landus Cooperative
	Kelli O'Brien	Union Pacific Railroad
	Joe Parsons	Iowa Interstate Railroad
	Ty Rosburg	Rosburg Livestock
X	Jessica Sargent	Sukup Manufacturing
X	Marty Wadle (Vice Chair)	Ruan Transportation
X	Mark White	Smith Fertilizer and Grain
	Ron White	Artco Fleeting Service

Ex-Officio

Present	Name	Representing
X	Jim Boerner	MAPA
X	Ryan Brauer	SIMPCO
	Amie Davidson	Iowa DNR Land Quality Bureau
X	Ray Gaesser	Iowa Transportation Commission
	Mike Hadley	Keokuk County Board of Supervisors
	Mike Harrington	Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship
X	Tom Heinold	USACE Rock Island District
X	Sean Litteral	Federal Highway Administration, Iowa Division
	Chuck McWilliams	USACE Omaha District
	Scott Marler	Director, Iowa Department of Transportation
X	Mike Norris	Southeast Iowa Regional Planning Commission
	Major Darren Reid	Iowa State Patrol

Contact person: Caleb Whitehouse, Iowa DOT Systems Planning Bureau, caleb.whitehouse@iowadot.us

"MAKING LIVES BETTER THROUGH TRANSPORTATION"

	Andrea Smith	Iowa Economic Development Authority
x	Jodi Stephenson	Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration
	Stephanie Weisenbach	Iowa Utilities Board

Iowa DOT

Present	Name	Representing
X	Ethan Aamodt	Systems Planning Bureau
	Stu Anderson	Transportation Development Division
	Mikel Derby	Government and Community Relations
	Kyle Durant	Systems Planning Bureau
	Katherine Drahos	Modal Transportation Bureau
	Brenda Freshour-Johnston	Systems and Administration Division
	Melissa Gillett	Chief Operating Officer
X	Jim Glaspie	Modal Transportation Bureau
	Travis Halm	Systems Planning Bureau
X	Sam Hiscocks	Systems Planning Bureau
	Maria Hobbs	Modal Transportation Bureau
X	Alex Jansen	Motor Vehicle Division
	Renee Jerman	Legislative Compliance
X	Amanda Martin	Modal Transportation Bureau
X	Tammy Nicholson	Modal Transportation Bureau
	Wes Musgrove	Systems Operations Division
X	Garrett Pedersen	Systems Planning Bureau
X	Charlie Purcell	Project Development
	Jeff von Brown	Systems Planning Bureau
	Andrea White	Systems Planning Bureau
X	Caleb Whitehouse	Systems Planning Bureau
	Lee Wilkinson	Administrative Services Division

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