

Iowa DOT Research Request for Proposal (RFP)

It is the intent of Iowa DOT Research to enter into agreement with the responsible bidder whose submitted proposal is the most advantageous, cost and other factors considered. Other factors include but are not limited to meeting or exceeding mandatory requirements, proposed staffing, and meeting required time schedule.

- Original RFP is posted at [the Iowa DOT Research Requests for Proposal page](#).
- Questions should be submitted to the project manager, identified below.
 - o Questions are due no later than 14 calendar days prior to the proposal due date. Questions and responses will be posted on [the Iowa DOT Research Requests for Proposal page](#) no later than 7 calendar days prior to the proposal due date.
- Responses must be submitted in pdf form to Proposal.Research@iowadot.us.
 - o Use the following naming convention for the PDF submission:
 - o **ResearchRFPNumber_Agency_PrincipalInvestigatorLastName.pdf**
- Responses must comply with the proposal guidelines in “Required Format for Iowa DOT Research Proposals.” Please refer to [the Iowa DOT Research Proposal & Deliverable Guidelines page](#).

RFP #: SWZDI-2027a

RFP Title: Use of Tactile Way Finding in Work Zones

RFP Posted: September 15, 2026

Proposals Due: On or Before November 1, 2026 at 12:00 Noon Central Standard Time.

Project Manager: Khyle Clute, khyle.clute@iowadot.us, (515)-239-1646

Budget

- ☐ Funding limitations have been established. Proposed budgets shall not exceed \$_____.
- ☒ Proposed budgets are not limited. They will be considered during the evaluation process.

Timeline

- ☐ Timing limitations have been established. Proposed timelines shall not extend beyond _____.
- ☒ Proposed timelines are not limited. They will be considered during the evaluation process.

Literature Review

- ☐ A Literature Review has been performed as part of project development and should not be included as a task in the proposal. The Literature Review is available for download here:
- ☒ A Literature Review has not been performed and may be included as a task in the proposal.

Data Management Plan

- ☐ Development of a Data Management Plan (DMP) is a required task in the proposal.
Refer to [Iowa DOT DMP guidance](#) section for more information.
- ☒ Development of a Data Management Plan is not a required task in the proposal.
-

Problem Statement

Work zones present significant navigation challenges for vulnerable road users (VRUs). The Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) provides guidance in these circumstances for utilizing barriers, vibrating surface devices, audible tones, etc., but the field deployment of these temporary systems remains relatively underexplored. A range of approaches, including but not limited to, tactile wayfinding systems, high-contrast visual elements, and structural guidance exist for potential accessibility improvements.

Objectives

The primary objective of this research is to examine the deployment feasibility and real-world effectiveness of alternative methods for directing VRUs through work zones in place of or, where required, in addition to audible notifications. The project proposed should include a synthesis of existing literature and a gathering of perspectives from stakeholders, including disability advocacy organizations, accessibility experts, and state DOTs, to identify the most promising candidate approaches that meet this objective. Then, a select number of these approaches should be evaluated for feasibility in temporary work zone conditions that consider factors that might include cost, ease of deployment, durability, compliance with MUTCD standards, etc. The selected approaches should also be subjected to field evaluation, structured user testing, or something similar that assesses their real-world effectiveness. Desirably, this might be done across a range of user populations. Finally, the project should conclude with actionable recommendations regarding the approaches considered, along with guidance on appropriate use cases, installation, and any potential updates to current work zone accessibility recommendations and requirements.

Minimum Project Tasks

1. Conduct literature synthesis
2. Perspectives survey
3. Development of recommendations and guidance

Products and Deliverables

1. Quarterly Progress Reports
2. Literature Synthesis
3. Survey Results
4. Draft Final Report
5. Final Report
6. Technology Transfer Technical Brief
7. Research Implementation Plan(s)
8. Photo or Image Files

Note: All products and deliverables shall comply with ADA accessibility and Section 508 requirements, regardless of funding source. Section 508 is an amendment to the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 mandating that all electronic and information technology developed, procured, maintained, or used by the federal government be accessible to people with disabilities. Refer to 29 U.S.C 794d for additional information.

Additional Information

- This RFP is funded through the Smart Work Zone Deployment Initiative (SWZDI) under a multi-state pooled fund led by Iowa DOT as TPF-5(545). Information about the current SWZDI pooled fund is available on [the Smart Work Zone Deployment Initiative pooled fund page](#).
- SWZDI encourages those proposing to reach out to the DOTs in the states noted below if the proposal includes possible piloting or field demonstration activities. Provide the name, title and email of the DOT contact if they support or provide possible locations for those activities.
- ****Proposal Restrictions****
 - o Proposals are limited to 8 pages. Resumes of the principal investigator and other named team members, along with other relevant materials, may be provided for additional information in appendices, but the proposal itself shall be a stand-alone document. The proposer should not expect the reviewers to read appendices to be able to evaluate the merit of a proposal.
 - o The proposing entity must be a college or university located in one of the states pledging funds to the SWZDI TPF-5(545) pooled fund: Alaska, Georgia, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, Pennsylvania, Texas, or Wisconsin. The principal investigator and any co-principal investigator(s) must be a faculty or professional staff employed by the proposing entity.
 - o Proposals submitted by current SWZDI principal investigators that have projects one year or more behind their originally contracted end date will not be considered.
 - o Individual respondents are limited to submitting on only one SWZDI proposal per year as either a principal investigator or co-principal investigator.

Non-Discrimination Statement

Iowa DOT ensures non-discrimination in all programs and activities in accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Any person who believes that they are being denied participation in a project, being denied benefits of a program, or otherwise being discriminated against because of race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability, low income and limited English proficiency, or needs more information or special assistance for persons with disabilities or limited English proficiency, please contact Iowa DOT Civil Rights at 515-239-7970 or by email at civil.rights@iowadot.us.