

PLANNING REVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

Agency Name

Every Iowa Regional Planning Association (RPA) receives Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) financial assistance. As a result, each RPA is responsible for the development of key transportation planning products and programming federal transportation funds in an established process that is consistent with state and federal guidelines. It is the joint responsibility of the Iowa Department of Transportation (Iowa DOT), FHWA, and FTA to ensure that the federal transportation program and federal funds are administered by each RPA in compliance with applicable state and federal laws.

Oversight of compliance with state and federal guidelines is largely accomplished throughout each year. In general, the transportation planning review process for each RPA consists three activities: a review of planning products in advance of the planning review, a review and discussion of planning review questionnaire responses, and preparation of a planning review report that summarizes the review and offers commendations and recommendations.

The primary goals of the RPA planning review are as follows:

- Gain a better understanding of the transportation planning process being conducted within the RPA;
- Outline/clarify areas for potential improvement of the region's transportation planning and programming process;
- Discuss how transportation planning funds are being used to support the development of the key transportation planning products, including the transportation planning work program, public participation plan, transportation improvement program, long range transportation plan, and passenger transportation plan;
- Ensure that the planning process is continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive, and operates in a manner consistent with federal guidelines;
- Provide an opportunity for discussion of how the region's transportation planning process is working or not working; and
- Strengthen the planning partnership between the RPA, Iowa DOT, FHWA, and FTA, including determining the need for additional guidance, assistance, and training to improve the overall RPA transportation planning process.

Each of these goals is addressed throughout the planning review questionnaire, which is tailored to focus on the following topics of significance: RPA Organization, Public Participation, Long-Range Transportation Plan, Transportation Improvement Program, Transit, Transportation Planning Work Program, Title VI, Financial Accountability, and Other. As we review and discuss these topics, please keep in mind that we want to understand how the RPA operates, learn about your challenges and successes, and listen to your thoughts and concerns regarding the cooperative relationship between the RPA, Iowa DOT, and public transportation providers.

RPA ORGANIZATION

1. Provide a general overview of the RPA planning area and any notable transportation activities or issues in the area that the organization is dealing with at this time. Example items to discuss could include any notable demographic or economic trends or issues; transportation planning activities that are occurring beyond standard document development and updates; and projects or transportation planning issues of note or concern.

2. Attach a chart showing the organizational structure of your overall agency. Note below the employees who work with transportation planning activities and the approximate percentage of their time that is spent on those activities.

3. What percentage of your overall agency's total budget is spent on transportation planning and programming?

4. Provide membership lists for your Policy Board and Technical Committee.
 - a. If your RPA is housed in a COG, is the RPA Policy Board the same as the COG's Board or separate from it?
 - b. If membership for either committee does not directly include cities under 5,000 or public transit representatives, describe how those entities interact with the RPA's committees.
 - c. Describe any additional standing committees that your RPA utilizes.

5. How often do your RPA Policy Board and Technical Committee meet?
 - a. Are these joint meetings with both Policy members and Technical staff or are they separate meetings?
 - b. If they meet separately, describe how communication occurs between the Technical Committee and Policy Board.
 - c. Are you satisfied with the level of attendance and participation by Iowa DOT, FHWA, and FTA at your meetings?

6. Are the different roles and responsibilities of an RPA, the Iowa DOT, the FHWA, and the FTA clearly understood by your agency, Policy Board, and Technical Committee? Note any questions or concerns that you have regarding these roles.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (PPP)

7. Provide the web address for your current Public Participation Plan (PPP).

8. When was your PPP last approved?
 - a. Is an update to the PPP planned at this time?
 - b. If so, what changes or improvements to the plan is the RPA considering?

9. Describe any unique public participation techniques your agency uses during the development of the LRTP, PPP, PTP, TIP, TPWP, and special planning studies.

10. How effective has your public participation process been in the past?
 - a. Have you tried different ways to increase the level of public participation?
 - b. Has the RPA received comments from the public on the existing public participation process?

11. How is reasonable public access provided at public meetings, and are persons with disabilities and limited English proficiency individuals accommodated at public meetings and in the publication of transportation documents?

12. Is your website up to date, with your current planning documents and meeting agendas and minutes easily accessible online for the public and other interested parties to view?

13. Is adequate guidance being provided by the Iowa DOT for the public participation process?

LONG-RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN (LRTP)

14. Provide the web address for your current LRTP.

15. Your current LRTP was completed in 2025. Discuss any significant successes and/or challenges you encountered during its development, as well as how the plan is being implemented by staff today.

16. How were long-term projects treated in your last LRTP? For example, were they specifically identified? Was fiscal analysis or constraint discussed? How do you plan to address long-term projects in your next update?

17. Please describe the relationship between your LRTP and TIP? Are goals or priorities from the LRTP incorporated into the TIP development process?

18. How are your Policy Board and Technical Committee involved in the LRTP update process?

19. How are various transportation stakeholders (such as aviation, freight, rail, transit, bicycle, pedestrian, economic development, environmental, safety/emergency, tribal, etc.) involved in the development of your LRTP?

20. How do you utilize the State Transportation Plan or other statewide planning documents for your LRTP? What could be done to make the State Transportation Plan more useful?

21. How do you coordinate with resource agencies (Iowa DNR, Iowa EDA, State Archeologist, etc.) in the development of your LRTP?

22. Has the Iowa DOT guidance for the LRTP been helpful? How can it be improved?

TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (TIP)

23. Provide the web address for your current TIP.
24. Discuss the process for developing your region's TIP and selecting projects.
- How are eligible applicants notified of funding availability and the submittal and review process for STBG and TAP projects?
 - For both STBG and TAP funding, what type of project information do you request? Do you use application forms?
 - For both STBG and TAP projects, how are projects submitted, prioritized, and selected?
 - Do you have any type of award letter or agreement that is used for STBG and TAP projects?
25. If your RPA suballocates funding, discuss your Board's reasoning for doing so within the context of a regional planning process. Would it be helpful for the Iowa DOT and FHWA to visit with your Policy Board concerning the benefits of not suballocating federal transportation funds?
26. Describe how each of the following types of project sponsors is included in the programming process. Also, note whether any STBG funding has been allocated to each of these entities in the past.
- Cities under 5,000
 - Public transit providers
 - Iowa DOT
27. How comfortable are you with the TPMS system? Do you have any suggestions for improvements?
28. In an average year, how often do you process amendments to your TIP?
- What types of amendments do you typically process?
 - What is the public input process (in terms of public notification, review period, public hearing requirements, etc.) for TIP amendments?
29. Is the status of projects, including Iowa DOT projects, discussed on a regular basis at Policy Board and Technical Committee meetings?
30. Has the Iowa DOT guidance for the TIP been helpful? How can it be improved?

TRANSIT

31. Provide the web address for your current Passenger Transportation Plan (PTP).

32. Has the planning process for the PTP been successful in fostering new relationships between the RPA and transit operator(s) and among passenger transportation providers?

33. Describe the relationship between RPA transportation planning staff and the regional transit operator(s). Is the region's transit agency housed within the same organization as the RPA? If not, describe the agency or agencies providing public transit in the region.

34. Do human service agencies actively participate in the PTP development process?
 - a. If not, can you explain why you believe this has not occurred?
 - b. If so, have new relationships been formed between the human service agencies and the RPA? Between the human service agencies and the transit operators?
 - c. Have any passenger transportation projects or services emerged because of these relationships?

35. Briefly describe any notable changes within the rural transit service (increased ridership, decreased ridership, new service, reduced service, etc.).

36. What are some of the top transit priorities for your planning area? What role did the PTP process play in determining or affirming these priorities?

37. Have any of the region's public transit providers requested the RPA to conduct transit planning studies? (Examples could include route planning, facility feasibility studies, passenger surveys, etc.)
 - a. If so, did the RPA perform the study?
 - b. If not, would the RPA consider such a request?

38. Has the Iowa DOT guidance for the PTP been helpful? How can it be improved?

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING WORK PROGRAM (TPWP)

39. Provide the web address for your current TPWP.
40. Besides the required 20% local match, do you have any other funding sources beyond the FHWA's State Planning and Research (SPR) or Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) funds and the FTA's Section 5311 or Section 5305e funds to finance transportation planning activities?
- If your agency is not spending all its federal transportation planning funds and thus has carryover funding from year to year, please describe why.
 - Do you see a need for additional planning funds to support transportation planning activities?
 - How is your local match provided, and do you have difficulty meeting the local match for the federal planning funds?
41. How are the agency's TPWP activities chosen and prioritized? Is this list of activities developed solely by staff, or are Policy Board and/or Technical Committee members also involved?
42. What method is used to document staff work hours?
43. Does the agency have any difficulty estimating how much time and budget will be spent on each work element?
44. Has the Iowa DOT guidance for the TPWP been helpful? How can it be improved?

FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

45. Do you claim indirect costs in Federal Aid billings?
- If no, please explain how costs incurred for a common or joint purpose (not readily assignable to the RPA, such as “Facilities” (e.g., depreciation on buildings, equipment; and operations and maintenance expenses), or “Administration” (e.g. general administration and general expenses, such as the director’s office, accounting, personnel, and all other types of expenditures)) are assigned and billed to the RPA’s federal transportation planning.
 - If yes, please list the types of indirect costs?
 - What specific method does the agency use for allocating indirect costs and computing indirect cost rates?
46. When was your last Cost Allocation Plan completed? What agency approves it?
47. What is your process for allocating costs such as staff time, fringe benefits, and supplies/overhead to projects?
48. Over the course of the past four years, what level of Federal Aid was budgeted and expended each year for planning activities?
49. Is your independent audit conducted annually or bi-annually?
- Did the agency have any corrective findings in any audit over the last six years? If so, what was the finding(s)?
 - Does the Policy Board receive and/or review the agency’s audit?
50. What do you consider the most challenging aspect of managing/administering federally funded projects?
51. Do the agency have any challenges with submitting reimbursement requests in a timely manner?
- Is adequate guidance being provided by Iowa DOT for the agency billings and progress reports?
 - How could the Iowa DOT’s processing of the agency reimbursement requests be improved?

OTHER

52. Do you have any special studies/projects you are working on or considering? Examples could include trail plans, bicycle/pedestrian plans, freight studies, safety studies or analyses, etc.
53. How do you coordinate with your neighboring RPAs and/or MPOs?
54. Do you understand the Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) process well enough to feel comfortable that the goal setting/reporting information you provide to the Iowa DOT is accurate and complete? If not, how could the Iowa DOT be of more assistance?
55. How well do you believe the regional transportation planning process is working? What obstacles stand in the way, and how could these be addressed?
56. Are you getting what you need/want from the RPA quarterly meetings?
- a. What do the agency like about the quarterly meetings?
 - b. What changes would you suggest for improving these meetings?
57. Are there any special training sessions you would like Iowa DOT, FHWA, or FTA to sponsor?
58. Is there anything else which could be done to improve the working relationship with the Iowa DOT, FHWA, and FTA? Is the Systems Planning Bureau adequately meeting your needs?