

STATE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROCESS FOR TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

September 2017

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Introduction

This public participation process was developed to offer Iowans the opportunity to help identify transportation issues, needs and priorities; plan how to meet those needs and priorities; and select transportation projects that turn the plans into reality. This means:

1. Information and opportunities for public involvement will be provided continuously throughout the planning and programming process.
2. Information will be widely distributed.
3. Comments will be sought and encouraged from the public, including transportation disadvantaged individuals and groups.
4. Public comments, suggestions and concerns will be listened to and considered when transportation decisions are made.

All public comments concerning development of the State Transportation Plan and Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) will be documented to help ensure the public is being heard.

The Iowa Department of Transportation is working with many partners to involve the public in transportation planning. Iowa's nine metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) and 18 regional planning affiliations (RPAs) are also taking steps to inform and involve the public in metropolitan and regional transportation planning. Transportation planning at the state level will tie regional and metropolitan plans together into a single statewide vision for the future. The Iowa DOT plans to coordinate state and local public participation activities where possible, eliminate duplicative efforts, and share the information and ideas we receive with each other. Iowa will continue to review the public participation process for effectiveness and update when necessary.

Structure

The state public participation process is divided into five parts:

1. **Federal requirements** – includes a description of the federal requirements for public participation.
2. **State Transportation Plan** – summarizes the various steps Iowa DOT takes to ensure the public has an opportunity to participate throughout the development of the State Transportation Plan (Iowa in Motion 2045).
3. **Iowa Transportation Improvement Program and STIP** – summarizes a similar set of steps to be used throughout the development of the annual STIP.

4. **Project development** – summarizes the practices currently used by the Iowa DOT to involve the public in project development. The Iowa DOT also encourages comment on ways the public can be involved in planning and development of individual projects.
5. **Public participation support** – summarizes practices currently used by the Iowa DOT to involve visualization techniques with the public in project development.

Six appendices are also attached:

1. **Appendix A: Definitions** – includes the definitions of transportation-related wording and terminology.
2. **Appendix B: Iowa Department of Transportation’s process for nonmetropolitan local official consultation** – includes the documented process for the Iowa DOT’s consultation with nonmetropolitan local officials.
3. **Appendix C: Iowa DOT contacts** – includes a map of the eight Iowa DOT district transportation planner areas, along with the name, address, phone and fax numbers. In addition, includes a list of contacts for those interested in receiving information or submitting comments on specific aspects of the planning process.
4. **Appendix D: Local contacts** – includes a map and addresses of the nine MPOs and 18 RPAs.
5. **Appendix E: Frequently asked questions** – serves as a quick reference guide about public involvement in the development of the State Transportation Plan and STIP.
6. **Appendix F: Interpreters at the Iowa Department of Transportation** – includes a list of Iowa DOT employees who are available for language interpretations.

Some people are interested in all the details; others just want a summary. If you are in the latter group, we suggest you read the boldfaced steps in I through V and Appendix B, for an overview.

Comments concerning the proposed State Public Participation Process for Transportation Planning should be sent to:

Iowa Department of Transportation
Program Management Bureau
Attention: Public Participation
800 Lincoln Way
Ames, Iowa 50010

Comments may also be sent by email at shawn.majors@iowadot.us

Federal legislation and regulations

A strong emphasis on public participation has been a priority at the federal level for many years. The most recent long term transportation bill, the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST-Act), maintains the public participation efforts contained in previous federal transportation bills.

23 CFR § 450.210 requires the statewide planning process be developed using a documented public involvement process that provides for public review and comment at key decision points. The state's public involvement process shall at a minimum include the following.

1. Early and continuous public involvement opportunities that provide timely information about transportation issues and decision making processes to citizens.
2. Provide reasonable public access to technical and policy information.
3. Provide adequate public notice of public involvement activities and time for public review and comment at key decision points.
4. Ensure that public meetings are held at convenient and accessible locations and times to the maximum extent practicable.
5. Use visualization techniques to describe the proposed State Transportation Plan and supporting studies to the extent practicable.
6. Make public information available in electronically accessible format and means, such as the Internet.
7. Demonstrate explicit consideration and response to public input.
8. Include a process for seeking out and considering the needs of those traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems, such as low-income and minority households, who may face challenges accessing employment and other services.
9. Provide for periodic review of the effectiveness of the public involvement process to ensure the process provides full and open access to all interested parties and revise the process, as appropriate.

The state shall provide for public comment on existing and proposed processes for public involvement. At a minimum, the state shall allow 45 calendar days for public review and written comment before processes are adopted and any major revisions to existing processes are adopted.

The state shall provide for nonmetropolitan local official participation in the development of the State Transportation Plan and STIP. The state shall have a documented process(es) for consulting with nonmetropolitan local officials representing units of general-purpose local government and/or local officials with responsibility for transportation that is separate and discrete from the

public involvement process and provides for their participation in the development of the State Transportation Plan and STIP.

- At least once every five years the state shall review and solicit comments from nonmetropolitan local officials and other interested parties for a period no less than 60 calendar days regarding the effectiveness of the consultation process and any proposed changes. A specific request for comments shall be directed to the state association of counties, state municipal league, regional planning agencies, or directly to nonmetropolitan officials.
- The state, at its discretion, shall be responsible for determining whether to adopt any proposed changes. If a proposed change is not adopted, the state shall make publicly available its reasons for not accepting the proposed change, including notification to nonmetropolitan local officials or their associations.

For each area of the state under the jurisdiction of Native American tribal government, the state shall develop the State Transportation Plan and STIP in consultation with the tribal government and the secretary of the U.S. Department of the Interior. States shall, to the extent practicable, develop a documented process(es) outlining roles, responsibilities and key decision points for consulting with Native American tribal governments and federal land management agencies in the development of the State Transportation Plan and STIP.

To read more about the FAST Act visit <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/fastact/>

Legislation

23 U.S.C. 109(h) – Economic, Social and Environmental Effects of Highways

This ensures that adverse effects of decision have been fully considered on federal highway projects. To read more about 23 U.S.C. 109(h), visit

https://www.environment.fhwa.dot.gov/projdev/imp109_h.asp

U.S.C. 128 – Public Hearing Requirements

This requires public hearings or the opportunity for public hearings for plans for federal-aid highway projects. To read more about 23 U.S.C. 128, visit

https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/public_involvement/archive/legislation/128.cfm.

23 U.S.C. 135 – Statewide Transportation Planning

This provides for reasonable access to comment on proposed plans. To read more about 23 USC 135, visit <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/USCODE-2011-title23/html/USCODE-2011-title23-chap1-sec135.htm>.

42 U.S.C. 2000 – Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, together with related statutes and regulations, prohibits discrimination based on race, color or natural origin in programs that receive federal financial assistance. To read more about Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, visit <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/>.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969

This requires consideration of impacts on human environments. To read more about NEPA, visit <https://ceq.doe.gov/>.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990

ADA states that “no qualified individual with a disability shall, by reason of such disability, be excluded from participation in or be denied the benefits of the services, programs, or activities of a public entity.” Sites for participation activities, as well as the information presented, must be accessible to persons with disabilities. ADA requires specific participation, particularly for developing paratransit plans, such as:

- Outreach by developing contacts, mailing lists and other means of notification.
- Consultation with disabled individuals.
- The opportunity for public comment.
- Accessible formats.
- Public hearings.
- Summaries of significant issues raised during the public comment period.
- Ongoing efforts to involve persons with disabilities in planning.

To read more about ADA, visit <https://www.ada.gov/>.

Regulations

23 CFR § 450 – Planning Assistance and Standards

This guides the development of statewide transportation plans and programs; requires early and continuous public involvement. To read more about 23 CFR § 450, visit

<https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/search/pagedetails.action?collectionCode=CFR&searchPath=Title+23%2FChapter+I%2FSubchapter+E%2FPart+450&granuleId=CFR-2011-title23-vol1-part450&packageId=CFR-2011-title23-vol1&oldPath=Title+23%2FChapter+I%2FSubchapter+E%2FPart+450&fromPageDetails=true&collapse=false&ycord=1445>

23 CFR § 771 – Environmental Impact and Related Procedures

This addresses early coordination, public involvement, and project development. To read more about 23 CFR § 771, visit <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/legsregs/directives/fapg/cfr0771.htm>.

40 CFR § 93.105 – Consultation

This guides federal, state and local intergovernmental consultation, resolution of conflicts and public involvement concerning environmental protection. To read more about 40 CFR § 93.105, visit <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CFR-1999-title40-vol14/pdf/CFR-1999-title40-vol14-sec93-105.pdf>.

40 CFR § 1500-1508 – Regulations for Implementing NEPA

This addresses availability of information to public officials and citizens prior to decisions being made. To read more about 40 CFR § 1500-1508, visit <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CFR-2011-title40-vol33/pdf/CFR-2011-title40-vol33-part-id1102.pdf>.

49 CFR § 24 – Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970

This ensures property owners and people displaced by federal-aid projects are treated fairly, consistently and equitably. To read more about 49 CFR § 24, visit

<https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CFR-2009-title49-vol1/pdf/CFR-2009-title49-vol1-part24.pdf>.

Executive Orders

Executive Order 12898 of Feb. 11, 1994 – Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations

This addresses environmental injustices in minority and low-income areas. Its purpose is to make sure each federal agency shall make achieving environmental justice part of its mission by identifying and addressing disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of its programs, policies and activities on minority programs, policies and activities on minority populations and low-income populations. It ensures the right that all people receive equal treatment regarding environmental justice issues. To read more about Executive Order 12898, visit <https://www.epa.gov/laws-regulations/summary-executive-order-12898-federal-actions-address-environmental-justice>.

Executive Order 13166 of Aug. 11, 2000 – Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency

Executive Order 13166 requires recipients of federal financial aid must ensure the programs and activities normally provided in English are accessible to persons with limited English proficiency. Please see Appendix F for a list of interpreters at the Iowa DOT. To read more about Executive Order 13166, visit <https://www.justice.gov/crt/executive-order-13166>.

Technical Advisory

Federal Highway Administration Technical Advisory T 6640.8A

This is guidance for preparing and processing environmental and Section 4(f) documents. To read more about FHWA Technical Advisory T 6640.8A, visit <https://www.environment.fhwa.dot.gov/projdev/impTA6640.asp>.

The Iowa DOT is obligated to manage its programs and provide planning services to the citizens of Iowa without regard to age, color, creed, disability, gender identity, national origin, pregnancy, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation or veteran's status. The Iowa DOT is further obligated to avoid discrimination based on handicap or disability. The Iowa DOT works to schedule public meetings at convenient and accessible locations, and at times and facilities compliant with the ADA. The Iowa DOT takes into account groups representing low-income, minority, and disabled populations when sending out media notices.

Statewide Transportation Planning Process

The Iowa Department of Transportation will provide information about transportation issues and decision-making processes to citizens; affected public agencies; transportation stakeholders; and other interested parties with a reasonable opportunity to comment on proposed transportation plans at key decision points. For more information on the process for nonmetropolitan local official consultation, please see Appendix B.

Consultation

The State Transportation Plan shall be developed in consultation with state, tribal and local agencies responsible for land use management, natural resources, environmental protection, conservation, and historical preservation. This consultation shall involve comparison of transportation plans to state and tribal conservation plans or maps and comparison of transportation plans to inventories on natural or historic resources.

Documents, such as the State Transportation Plan, implementation plans, and other plans, studies, or policies involve the public in the planning process of producing these documents. The Iowa DOT will use the following steps during their development.

1. **Use appropriate electronic mailing lists to notify the public.** The Iowa DOT's Systems Planning Bureau maintains a database, which includes addresses of a variety of organizations, agencies and individuals interested in or involved with transportation. A few of these include metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs)/regional planning affiliations (RPAs), county engineers and boards of supervisors, various advisory committees, and other individuals and groups.

This database and others are used as part of the public notification process. Notification regarding the availability of draft plans and information about key events and opportunities for public involvement is emailed to those listed. In addition to these email notifications and use of the Iowa DOT's website www.iowadot.gov, other means of notifying the public include:

- Issuing news releases to the media.
- Providing news releases to interested statewide organizations for dissemination at meetings and through newsletters.
- Providing information through Iowa DOT newsletters and social media, other state/regional agency newsletters, bulletins, and websites.

2. **Use advisory committees.** Modal advisory committees have been established and will provide advice throughout individual modal planning efforts. Various other ad hoc advisory committees will be used as specific issues, policies and plans are developed. Membership will be broad-based to assure appropriate stakeholder participation.
3. **Hold regional public meetings, when appropriate.** Periodically, and on an as-needed basis, the Iowa DOT will hold public listening and public input meetings, as well as roundtable discussion sessions. Attendees at public meetings are encouraged to submit formal written comments on public comment forms provided, or on the Iowa DOT's website. The public comment period is set at a minimum of 45 days. In addition, meetings are held with RPAs and MPOs, and other groups as requested.
4. **Use the Iowa Transportation Commission (Commission) meetings.** The Commission workshop and business meetings are used to update Commission members, the media, stakeholders, and the public about the State Transportation Plan, implementation plans and other planning efforts. In addition to the Ames meetings, regional Commission meetings are held each year throughout the state. Members of the public are encouraged to present their comments and views concerning transportation issues at these regional meetings.
5. **Encourage written comments.** Public comment forms are provided at public meetings. In addition, public comments can be provided to the Iowa DOT through the use of email and the Iowa DOT's website. Public comments are shared with the Commission for their consideration.
6. **Distribute draft plans and documents for review.** Upon completion of a draft plan or document, statewide distribution begins, using the appropriate distribution lists. A public review period of no less than 45 days is provided. During this period, regional meetings with the transportation districts may be held. (See steps 1, 3 and 5 for additional information.)
7. **Review state public participation process.** Public comment is invited and the state public participation process is revised, as needed, for use in the continuing development of Iowa's planning process. A 45-day public review period is provided if significant changes are proposed for the public participation process for transportation planning.

Revising approved State Transportation Plan or implementation plans

Amendments to the State Transportation Plan or implementation plans are posted to the Iowa DOT's website and advertised through the appropriate notification processes outlined above. A public review period of no less than 15 days is provided.

Iowa Five-Year Transportation Improvement Program and Statewide Transportation Improvement Program

The state generates two documents that identify projects for the primary highway program and transit system activities: Iowa Five-Year Transportation Improvement Program (Program) and Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). Federal statutes require a STIP.

The Program identifies primary highway and local transit system projects, as well as programs for aviation, railroad, state and federal recreational trails; Revitalize Iowa's Sound Economy [RISE]; statewide Transportation Enhancement projects; Iowa Clean Air Attainment Program; Safe Routes to School; and traffic and safety, using both state and federal funding. State-sponsored projects within the STIP are included in the Program. The Program does not include county road and city street improvements. Generally, it is approved by the Iowa Transportation Commission (Commission) for publication in June of each year.

The STIP is a four-year program, which identifies roadway, transit and enhancement projects that are candidates for funding from the Federal Highway Administration or Federal Transit Administration, including state, federal, city and county improvements. City and county projects in the STIP are compiled from the 27 transportation improvement programs (TIPs) generated by the regional planning affiliations (RPAs) and metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs). Generally, the STIP is scheduled for submittal to FHWA/FTA in September of each year in anticipation of an Oct. 1 effective date.

Federal law requires broad public involvement in development of the STIP. Iowa's procedures offer many opportunities for the public to participate in programming activities. In the case of state-sponsored projects, significant statewide public participation is encouraged and facilitated during the development of the Program. The Program is also reviewed as a component of the 27 MPOs' and RPAs' TIPs. MPOs and RPAs also have designated procedures for project selection and public input, all accomplished prior to including projects in the STIP. Each MPO and RPA has both technical and policy boards that participate in selection of projects within their geographic area. They also review all projects identified in the STIP.

Successful development of the STIP is dependent on completion of statewide public participation during development of state, MPO and RPA TIPs. Public participation efforts for highway and transit programs on state and local systems are accomplished by the Iowa Department of

Transportation and the 27 MPOs and RPAs. Coordination through the planning agencies provides broad opportunities for public review by informed participants.

Funding sources for primary highway projects are determined by the Iowa DOT, based on various management tools and eligibility requirements. Projects determined to be candidates for federal funding are included in the STIP to ensure compliance with federal requirements. Primary road projects that are approved by the Commission are included in the STIP.

Summaries of public involvement procedures for both the Program and STIP are discussed below.

Iowa Five-Year Transportation Improvement Program

The Commission and Iowa DOT develop the Program to inform Iowans of planned investments in the state's multimodal transportation system. The Program is typically updated and approved each year in June.

The Program encompasses investments in aviation, transit, railroads, trails and highways. The process of making critical decisions about what investments will be made to preserve and expand the state-managed highway network is complex. It involves input from a wide range of individuals and organizations, and is based on an expansive programming process. The major steps in that process include:

- Identifying projects.
- Establishing programming objectives.
- Evaluating potential projects.
- Developing the final program.

Projects are identified through a broad array of sources. Some requests are generated through the Iowa DOT's bridge, pavement or safety management systems that track the needs of those existing systems. Others are garnered through requests from Iowa DOT district offices, local governments and public input. Once projects are identified, the Commission takes into consideration the Program goals and commitments to development.

When the Commission establishes its annual programming objectives, the Commission not only takes into consideration the highway projects identified during project identification, but also the Commission's previous program goals and commitments to the development of highway projects or corridors. Other considerations include estimated project costs, revenue projections, Iowa's State Transportation Plan goals and objectives, and a highway system analysis.

After the Commission establishes its programming objectives, Iowa DOT staff evaluates potential projects based on technical factors, such as highway safety, engineering, traffic management, and other criteria. The final step involves Iowa DOT staff and Commission review and consideration of additional nontechnical factors, including public input, economic development, project sequencing or staging, and statewide equalization of service.

The transportation programming process is a continuous, year-round effort. After the highway section is approved, its programming cycle begins again. The Iowa DOT's contracting and revenue experiences are closely monitored and monthly updates are reviewed by the Commission. Because Iowa uses a "pay-as-you-go" investment model, adjustments to the Program may be warranted throughout the year to ensure the investment plan remains balanced and expenses do not exceed revenues.

The following is a summary of the public involvement process utilized both during the development of the Program and after the Program has been approved.

- 1. Use of the Commission meetings.** The Commission meets at least monthly, providing an opportunity for the public to discuss programming issues and identify potential projects. Proposals for various sections of the Program are reviewed with the Commission throughout the year and the primary highway program, a component of the Program, is the result of ongoing project selection and scheduling processes. On a periodic basis, the Commission considers adjustments to the primary highway program section. Information regarding these changes can be found on the Iowa DOT's website: www.iowadot.gov/program_management/five_year.html .

The Commission also seeks citizen participation by conducting multiple public input meetings each year. These meetings are held in various locations around the state (urban and rural environments) to promote participation by citizens statewide. Commissioners encourage representatives of RPAs and MPOs, as well as cities, counties, chambers of commerce, economic development groups, and modal transportation providers to voice their comments concerning transportation policies and programs at the meetings.

Interested groups and individuals are also encouraged to attend. If individuals are unable to attend, the Iowa DOT offers video and audio streaming of the Commission meetings.

- 2. Use of public announcements and widespread distribution.** The Iowa DOT's website www.iowadot.gov/program_management/five_year.html provides online access to all sections of the Program. Media releases are sent out prior to each Commission meeting and public input meeting encouraging citizens to attend.

- 3. Receive and incorporate public comments.** The minimum comment period for the draft Program is 30 days from the date of the public notice. Written comments by letter, fax or email are encouraged. The announcement also indicates when and where a statewide public meeting will be held to accept direct comments. Upon receipt of public comments, any necessary modifications are made to the Program prior to Commission approval.

Statewide Transportation Improvement Program

The FAST Act requires broad public involvement in the development of the STIP and requires states develop a proactive public participation process in developing STIPs. The successful development of the STIP is dependent not only on public involvement at the state level but also at the local level during the development of local TIPs. Coordination of public review through the MPO and RPA planning agencies ensures broad opportunities for public review by informed participants.

In the case of state-sponsored projects, significant statewide public participation is encouraged and facilitated during the development of the Program. State-sponsored projects identified as candidates for federal funding are included in the STIP to ensure compliance with that federal requirement. No state-participating primary road projects can be included in the STIP unless they have been approved by the Commission in the Program.

The following is a summary of the public involvement process utilized both during the development of the STIP and after the STIP has been approved.

- 1. Use of public announcements and widespread distribution.** The draft STIP is distributed in July to Iowa DOT district planners, MPOs and RPAs. The Iowa DOT prepares a news release notifying media outlets of the availability of the draft STIP. The same news release is published on the Iowa DOT's website and directs the public to an electronic copy of the document online. Finally, upon request, paper copies are provided on an individual basis to interested parties.
- 2. Receive and incorporate public comments.** The minimum comment period for the proposed STIP is 30 days from the date of the public notice. Written comments by letter or fax are encouraged. The announcement also indicates when and where a statewide public meeting will be held to accept direct comments. Upon receipt of public comments, any necessary modifications are made to the STIP before delivery to FHWA and FTA.
- 3. Statewide Public Meeting.** Each year a statewide public meeting is held in Ames to solicit comments concerning the STIP.

STIP Submission to FHWA and FTA

The draft STIP may be revised based on comments received during the public review. Upon finalizing the STIP, both the STIP and final MPO TIPs will be submitted to FHWA and FTA for approval.

If the federal agencies find all documents submitted to be in conformance with federal requirements, the Iowa DOT will be notified of the joint approval of the STIP by FHWA and FTA. If additional material is required or some part of the filing does not conform to federal requirements, the FHWA and/or FTA will notify the Iowa DOT of required changes. The FHWA and FTA will also make available the status of the draft STIP until the requirements are met. The goal is to accomplish unconditional approval of the STIP by both federal agencies prior to the beginning of the federal fiscal year on Oct. 1. This approval allows for authorization of federal-aid projects to be requested anytime thereafter. Paper copies of the final approved STIP are provided to the MPOs and RPAs, and any public entity that requests copies.

Revising the STIP

Revisions are determined to be either amendments or administrative modifications and then processed according to the guidelines for each of these revision types. Iowa DOT-sponsored amendments to the STIP are posted on the Iowa DOT's Program Management Bureau website at https://iowadot.gov/program_management/proposed-stip-amendments and are available for public comment. The minimum comment period for proposed amendment(s) is 14 days from the date of public notice.

Project Development

Public participation varies widely in the development of individual transportation infrastructure projects that receive public funding. For instance, in the case of roadways, public financing is provided only for publicly owned facilities. Specific opportunities for public involvement in the planning and programming of individual construction projects are required. However, in the case of public financing provided for rail, aviation, transit and trail facilities, the facilities may be owned by a private, nonprofit or local government body. Public participation in the development of these projects is left up to the owner of the facility. In the case of transit, public finance is provided for capital projects, and some operation and planning costs, as well as public participation takes place earlier in the long-range planning and programming stages.

Public participation in primary highway project development is coordinated by the Iowa Department of Transportation's Location and Environment Bureau (LEB). Public involvement policy is applied to all primary highway projects without consideration of funding or which jurisdiction (local vs. state) administers the project. This section describes how these activities are applied and coordinated into an overall public involvement program.

Federal-aid Projects

Federal-aid-funded projects on the Primary Highway System may involve the following actions/activities.

- Coordination of public involvement activities with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) process.
- Public involvement, which should begin early in the project development process (23 CFR § 777.111[h]) and continue throughout the project. Public involvement is a major aspect in ensuring that decisions are “in the best overall public interest.”
- Soliciting input from the public and notifying and involving the public in public meetings and hearings.
- Giving reasonable notice to the public of public hearings, including the availability of explanatory information, and information required to comply with public involvement requirements of other laws, executive orders, and regulations. For most projects involving an environmental impact statement (EIS) or environmental assessment (EA), Iowa DOT holds a public hearing. Typically a notice of availability of the environmental document is published along with the public hearing notice.
- Submitting the hearing's transcript and certification to Federal Highway Administration (23 CFR § 771) following the public hearing. This includes copies of written and oral comments.

- Describing where the public can access NEPA documents and related information. (40 CFR § 1500-1508) through publication of the Notice of Availability (NOA).

Public involvement activities are identified and implemented as appropriate by the Iowa DOT's OLE staff, in conjunction with other Iowa DOT and consultant staff involved in the proposed project. Questions related to the public involvement process should be directed to the OLE staff.

Public Involvement Strategy

The mission of Iowa DOT's public involvement process is an early and continuous public interaction throughout the project development process. Iowa DOT has developed a public involvement plan, which describes how Iowa DOT will conduct its public involvement process in compliance with federal and state regulations and provides a framework for how it will fulfill its mission. The public involvement plan was implemented by Iowa DOT's PPM 510.02.

Consideration of public involvement activities

There is a correlation between the type of environmental document being completed for a proposed project, and the extent of public involvement. Although there is no prescribed formula for public involvement based on the type of environmental document (public involvement activities are tailored to the characteristics of a project). As a general rule, as the level of documentation increases, so does the scope of public involvement. Typically, a proposed improvement being processed as a categorical exclusion (CE) would have fewer overall environmental and social impacts than a proposed improvement being processed as an EA. An EA is used to determine if a higher level of documentation is warranted (i.e., completion of an EIS) when it is clear that a CE is not appropriate. Thus, as the documentation level increases so do the potential impacts and the need to expand the opportunities for public input.

Discussion of “controversy”

Projects with significant controversy, organized opposition or the possibility of legal action may require extra public involvement efforts to understand and address public concerns. The amount of additional public involvement efforts depends on the project and its issues. Early in the project development process and before developing the public involvement plan, the project management team and OLE's public involvement section will take steps to understand the concerns of the interested groups/parties to identify the most effective techniques for soliciting input and responding to concerns.

Public involvement plan

While rarely completed, a project specific public involvement plan may be developed for a proposed improvement. The appropriate Iowa DOT district engineer and project management team, working with OLE's public involvement section, will determine the need for a public involvement plan. This plan will identify activities and techniques that will be used to solicit public and resource agency input throughout the project. The district engineer, project manager and project management team, working with the public involvement section, will develop the public involvement plan for a proposed project. Regardless of whether or not a formalized Public Involvement Plan is developed the appropriate procedures and processes will be followed to ensure that, at a minimum, regulator Public Involvement compliance is achieved.

Environmental Justice and Limited English Proficiency

Environmental justice and limited English proficiency (LEP) concerns, including possible impacts to minority and low-income populations, will be identified during the development process. Appropriate measures will be taken to include these populations in the public involvement process. In addition, Iowa DOT will take reasonable steps to ensure meaningful access to programs and activities by LEP persons. Please contact the Location and Environment Bureau (LEB) for details of the LEP evaluation process and examples of transcribed public involvement materials.

Public Information Meetings/Public Hearings

The mission of Iowa DOT's public involvement process is an early and continuous public interaction throughout the project development process. Iowa DOT has developed a public involvement

Public information meetings

Public involvement events are held in accord with the Iowa DOT process. One or more public information meetings may be held at important project milestones to gather public input and disseminate information (for example, during development of the concept, following development of the range of alternatives or when narrowing the field of feasible alternatives). The timing of public information meetings should be coordinated with other activities, such as the 404/NEPA concurrence points, steering committee meetings or completion of the project right-of-way plans.

There is no regulatory requirement to hold public information meetings. However, a public information meeting can satisfy Iowa DOT's requirement for a public involvement activity for certain projects, and it also meets the intent of the Iowa DOT's Project Development Public Involvement Plan. For example, whenever a primary highway is closed to traffic or right of way is acquired that does not require a public hearing, Iowa DOT may conduct a public information

meeting. Public information meetings occasionally are held during the corridor preservation implementation process. Typically, project development staff along with the public involvement section will identify the need for a public information meeting.

Public hearings

Iowa DOT holds a formal public hearing for projects with an environmental impact statement (EIS), an environmental assessment (EA), and typically for a project where condemnation of agricultural land is anticipated. The public hearing is conducted during the document review period, where Iowa DOT officials hear the public's views and concerns about a proposed project. The public hearing will consist of a formal presentation, a recorded question and answer session, and an open forum session. For further details on the requirements for a public hearing please contact the Location and Environment Bureau (LEB).

Public hearings generally are held for federal-aid projects if the project involves any the following.

- Completion of an EA, a draft EIS, or a supplemental EIS.
- Acquisition of substantial amounts of agricultural land.

Joint public hearing

Joint public hearings are occasionally held to satisfy the hearing requirements of other resource agencies involved in the project, or when permits and approvals are required for a project. For example, the U.S. Coast Guard or the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers may request public hearings as part of their reviews of bridge permit applications (USCG) or Section 404 permit applications (USACE). The project management team, working with FHWA and affected resource agencies, will identify opportunities to hold a joint public hearing, when appropriate.

Public involvement plan (PIP)

The public involvement process will be tailored to each project. While occasionally formalized, most often project related public involvement is information and managed as the project progresses by the project management team in coordination with the public involvement section of OLE. The ingredients of a good public involvement plan are utilized within the context of project development regardless of whether a formalize plans is developed or not. If a Public Involvement Plan is completed the plan should incorporate public involvement techniques identified in the manuals and other nationally recognized techniques for public involvement. A copy of the PIP developed for an individual project should be copied to FHWA. The district engineer, project manager and project management team, working with OLE's public involvement section, are responsible for developing a PIP.

Environmental justice concerns, including possible impacts to minority and low-income populations, will be identified during the NEPA process and appropriate measures will be taken to include these populations in the public involvement process. If a Public Involvement Plan is developed, these efforts will be documented within the plan. In addition, the Iowa DOT will take reasonable steps to ensure meaningful access to its programs and activities by persons of LEP. (Refer to Attachment B for examples of translated public involvement materials and to view Iowa DOT's PPM 300.05 – Title VI Program.)

Right-of-way acquisition involving agricultural lands

To ensure that impacts associated with the relocation of individuals, groups, businesses or institutions are addressed, an Iowa DOT's Right of Way Bureau representative will develop relocation information during the NEPA process and will, as necessary, be present at public hearings and public information meetings. Public information opportunities for projects requiring acquisition of right of way will be scheduled throughout the development process. Additional opportunities for public input will be scheduled as deemed appropriate by the district engineer or project manager.

The Iowa DOT will provide the property owner notification and public involvement opportunity required by Iowa Code 6B for projects that may require acquisition of agricultural land.

Arranging a public meeting or hearing

OLE's public involvement section, in coordination with the Iowa DOT's district office, sets the hearing or meeting date. If a meeting location is required, the Iowa DOT's district office oversees securing an appropriate facility for holding a public hearing or meeting. Public hearings and meetings should be held at a convenient time and place and located in a facility easily accessible to public transportation. The facility's size should comfortably accommodate the anticipated number of people attending. Public hearings and meetings typically are held in publicly owned facilities to help keep facility costs low. The facility should be able to accommodate all attendees in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 or allow reasonable accommodation to do so.

Notification of a public meeting or hearing

The legal notice or NOA for a public hearing will be prepared by OLE's public involvement section. It will be published as a legal notice in the official county newspaper or newspaper of general circulation in the county or city. The notice will include information regarding the availability of

the project's NEPA document unless project specifics require that the NOA be published separately. A display ad will also be published prior to the public hearing.

A legal notice for a project that requires compliance with Iowa Cod 6B will be published four to 20 days prior to the meeting/hearing. When the Iowa Code 6B process is conducted in conjunction with a hearing, the 6B notice will be included in the legal notice/NOA. The 6B publication requirement will then be satisfied if the legal notice publication occurs during the four to 20 day timeframe, otherwise a second publication will be made.

For projects that require a public information meeting, a notice will be published in a paper of general circulation using a display ad format prior to the meeting. Additional publications, or the publishing of a legal notice, could occur based on project need, or as requested by the project manager.

The public hearing will be held at least 15 calendar days after publication of the NOA for the NEPA document (EA or draft EIS). The publication of the NOA, and the timing of the hearing date, will also take into consideration the EA, draft EIS and 4(f) review periods.

Preparation of hearing and meeting exhibits

The public hearings and public information meetings will provide the following information as appropriate.

- The project's purpose, need and consistency with the goals and objectives of any local urban planning.
- The project's alternatives and major design features.
- The social, economic, environmental and other impacts of the project.
- The relocation assistance program and the right-of-way acquisition process.
- The Iowa DOT's procedures for written or oral statements from the public.
- A copy of the signed NEPA document (EA or DEIS).
- Project exhibits.

Meeting format

The format for public hearings and meetings generally follows an informal open forum format. The informal forum allows the public to come anytime during the scheduled meeting time and talk to the project team. The Iowa DOT's district office or project management team will identify appropriate staff, including engineering and environmental consultants, to attend the event. For Public hearings a formal component is also added at a prescheduled time that allows for a formal

presentation and question and answer session. The formal component is usually scheduled at the beginning of the meeting with the informal forum following. The informal session allows more public access to Department staff while the formal component allows everyone to hear exactly the same information and have the benefit of hearing the questions of others attending the event.

Soliciting public comments

Various methods are used to provide the public the opportunity to enter statements into the project record/transcript. They include a statement made individually or privately at the public meeting /hearing, a comment form sent to the Iowa DOT after the public hearing/meeting, or email or online correspondence sent to the Iowa DOT. It is recommended that the project team also write comments when speaking to the public one-on-one during the meeting to ensure all comments are noted.

Comments received at public hearings and meetings, or during the public comment period, are considered throughout the development process and environmental document, as appropriate.

Public hearing transcript and certification

Following a public hearing, OLE's public involvement section, in coordination with Iowa DOT's district office and other Iowa DOT offices, will prepare a transcript of the hearing. The public hearing transcript includes all recorded proceedings and oral statements, as well as copies of all written or electronically submitted statements from the public during the formal comment period. The transcript, and a certification that a public hearing was conducted, will be submitted to the FHWA's Iowa Division office. A public information meeting summary will be completed by OLE's public involvement section or Iowa DOT's district office, as appropriate, for projects with public information meetings.

Construction

Just prior to beginning and during the construction phase, the public must be kept informed of construction-related activities including the use of detour routes during construction and contact information. If a significant amount of time has elapsed (because of funding or other issues) between the end of the project design (and its associated coordination activities) and the start of construction, extra effort will be necessary to remind the public of the upcoming improvements and detour routes. Public meetings, social media, and media releases are examples of techniques for public involvement activities during this phase.

Tribal Consultation

Native Americans comprise approximately 0.5 percent of the total population of Iowa. There is one federally recognized Native American tribe in Iowa (Sac and Fox Nation of Mississippi) located in Tama County. There are other tribes in and around Iowa and presently, 13 tribes have expressed an interest (through the Iowa Department of Transportation's Environment and Location Bureau's (LEB) cultural resources section) in transportation activities within the state. None that fall within the boundaries of any designated Iowa metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs).

Iowa DOT and FHWA work to meet the needs of tribes as they are presented on a project by project basis. Additionally, every few years Iowa DOT and FHWA work to host a Tribal Summit. These events are typically grant funded and provide an opportunity to listen and develop better processes. Tribal Summits were most recently held in 2014 and 2017.

Project development process for tribal involvement

FHWA is required to contact Native American tribes if a project has the potential to affect cultural resources located within an area in which the tribe has indicated an interest. FHWA has delegated responsibility for initial contact with the tribes to the Iowa DOT, specifically to OLE's cultural resources section. The cultural resources section will contact the tribes who have expressed an interest in cultural resources within a particular proposed project area. The cultural resources section will contact the tribes (and the Office of the State Archaeologist) when Native American cultural issues, including burials, are potentially impacted. The tribes and OSA must be contacted when known or suspected burials are inadvertently impacted during construction.

Section 106 emphasizes that tribes that may have an interest in a project's potential for impacting Native American sites. It is recommended that contact should occur with Tribes early and often. The cultural resources section staff and consultants strive to be sensitive to Native American tribes' cultural traditions. Deadlines and communication styles can be very different among the various governmental agencies and tribes. Although FHWA has delegated responsibility for initial contact to OLE, the tribe always has the option of working directly with the federal agency because of their status as a sovereign nation and their right to government-to-government communication.

The cultural resources section has developed the Iowa DOT Tribal Notification form to be used with all tribal contacts. The form is a self-mailer, designed to make the notification and information gathering process as simple as possible, and to encourage tribal response. This process completed by OLE provides for a usual point of contact as selected by the Tribe, often a Tribal Historic Preservation Officer, but depending on a tribe's indication of interest, consultation may

occur more or less often. The initial contact with the tribe(s) is made by the Iowa DOT during the scoping, public meetings and National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) document notification phases for major projects. This contact is usually part of the standard public notification, and is completed through OLE's NEPA and public involvement sections. The tribes receive materials sent to all other interested parties, plus the Iowa DOT Tribal Notification Form.

The second Iowa DOT contact with the tribe(s) (often the first contact for minor projects) will take place after the archaeological survey work is complete, usually when the findings include prehistoric archaeology sites. The information provided to the tribe(s) includes an abstract of the survey that summarizes what was found, along with a map identifying potentially significant sites. Comments from the tribe(s) are solicited at this time. The tribe(s) can choose its level of consultation for this project: further consultation, copy of the full report, or no immediate comment but requests future contact with the cultural resources section concerning the project.

The third Iowa DOT contact with the tribe(s) occurs when one or more tribes has indicated an interest in being involved with the project, or when the Iowa DOT anticipates that there will be adverse effects to a site known to be of interest to the tribe(s). The interested tribes are provided with copies of the site evaluation results and the site's determination of eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places. A map of the site is included, as is a discussion of proposed avoidance, minimization or mitigation measures. The tribes are again asked for their comment, and are requested to give an indication as to whether they would like to participate in a memorandum of agreement (MOA). A project does not require tribal MOA participation for approval. The tribe(s) will be provided a final copy of the data recovery report, if they have requested one.

State Transportation Plan and STIP process for tribal involvement

A tribal consultation process has evolved separate from the consultation process that occurs for project development. In developing the State Transportation Plan and STIP, the Iowa Department of Transportation provides an opportunity for tribal governments to participate in the statewide transportation planning process. The Iowa DOT will work with tribal officials that have expressed an interest in transportation activities and being involved on a consultation basis for the portions of the plans in tribal areas of Iowa.

OLE's cultural resources section surveys various tribes and nations identified as having an ancestral or historical connection to Iowa and asked for their preference regarding several consultation options regarding highway construction projects in Iowa. The Iowa DOT's Program Management Bureau uses the list of tribal contacts that have indicated a desire to receive notification and consultation on highway construction projects.

Depending on a tribe's indication of interest, the remaining consultation process completed by the Iowa DOT provides for at least one more point of contact. After the tribal response, the initial contact with the tribe(s) will coincide with the distribution of the draft STIP or State Transportation Plan for public review. It is made by Iowa DOT staff to evaluate local tribal initiatives for their consistency with the STIP and the statewide planning process. The contact with tribal governments provides an opportunity to discuss the development of the STIP, development of or updates to the State Transportation Plan, and any transportation issues or concerns regarding transportation projects in their tribal areas.

An Iowa DOT Tribal Notification form specific to planning was developed to be used with all tribal contacts. The form is also a self-mailer, designed to make the notification and information gathering process as simple as possible, and to encourage tribal response. These forms invite tribal governments to coordinate with the Iowa DOT on the STIP and State Transportation Plan early in the process. The form also provides the opportunity to make comments on the draft STIP or State Transportation Plan. Final comments from the tribe(s) are solicited at this time. The Iowa DOT will review and consider all comments received from the forms and meetings with the tribal governments, and will determine whether to recommend any modifications of the STIP or State Transportation Plan.

Public participation support

An effective public participation program tailored to the anticipated project issues and to the needs of the project stakeholders is important for project success. To be effective, the public participation program must disseminate accurate information in a timely manner, include outreach efforts to all affected or interested parties, and provide meaningful opportunities for public input in advance of key project decisions.

Coordination with social media

A variety of public outreach tools are used to facilitate stakeholder participation in the project development and planning process. However, these outreach tools may be reaching fewer citizens. Over the years, technology has opened up new communication avenues. Recently, the Iowa Department of Transportation and the Federal Railroad Association cooperated to bring an online, self-directed, open house public meeting for a rail system planning study. An online, self-directed, open house public meeting allows the public to participate and offer feedback over a larger geographical footprint than holding meetings.

The online avenue of public participation is now branching over into social media. One of these new social media sites, Facebook, estimates that more than 100 million Americans log on daily. As a result of social media websites and cell phone applications, the Internet has now surpassed television as the most viewed media in the United States. These social media sites, such as Facebook and Twitter, are considered a vehicle for reaching younger demographics, but social networking has also grown in popularity among seniors and baby boomers alike.

The Iowa DOT is transitioning into using social media to engage public participation. The Iowa DOT already has a Facebook and Twitter account, but by creating a Facebook page or a Twitter feed for specific projects, these efforts will allow public participants to discuss the project or plan with one another, where in the past, most participants would not know what another participant wrote or emailed in. In this setting, communication is real-time and allows citizens to easily post their input and participate in the process; and builds a relationship between participants and the project manager as he/she will be able to participate in discussions, add updates, and feature photos and drawings simultaneous of all discussion.

Using social media is another tool in the public participation process. No matter which tool is used, early and ongoing participation is needed to ensure stakeholder issues and concerns are addressed in the location study process, encourage early public input to the project alternatives, and build public understanding and support for project decisions.

Geographic Information System (GIS) as a tool

GIS is a useful tool for supporting various public participation programs and tasks. At its simplest level, GIS maps and reports help communicate project issues to the public. Well-designed GIS maps shown at public meetings and in newsletters can help agencies and the public better understand a project and potential issues. A GIS website allows this audience to navigate a map of the project area, view data layers of interest, and perform simple queries (e.g., “Show me all schools within five miles of the project alternatives.”) using a common Web browser.

GIS can also be used by the project team to better manage the public participation program. A valuable GIS tool in this context is “geocoding”— the translation of textual addresses (e.g., 1234 Oak St.) stored in a spreadsheet or database table, into X, Y point locations. GIS mapping of these locations shows geographic distributions that would otherwise not be evident. For example, areas of the county that geographically show either adequate or inadequate public participation.

The locations of public participants can be characterized by the nature of their comments or concerns. For example, points could show the locations of households that have provided

comments on a project; these points could be further symbolized according to whether the comments were favorable or negative to the project; whether the comment pertained to traffic, noise, etc. Such a map provides the public involvement team with a geographic understanding of how the public is reacting to a project.

GIS mapping of addresses also can help analyze environmental justice issues. Locations of public participants (e.g., households on a mailing list or attendees of public meetings) can be plotted on demographic maps (showing income and ethnicity) to help test whether adequate participation occurs in disadvantaged neighborhoods. If such mapping shows low participation by disadvantaged groups, then additional outreach can be conducted in those neighborhoods.

Visualization

Visualization is a computerized method for graphically rendering a proposed project or an element of a proposed project (e.g., a bridge or overpass) to provide the project team, agencies and the public with a better understanding of how the facility will look in its environment. Visualization techniques include simulations (static images resembling a photograph of the built facility) and animations (computer-generated video, as in a drive- or fly-through rendition, that places either the viewer or landscape features in motion). Visualizations can be generated within GIS software or by other specialized software.

If visualizations are desired on a project, an effective method is to export the GIS database to the visualization software (providing the GIS data is of sufficient quality and detail). GIS data that contribute to visualizations include terrain, vegetation, hydrograph, land use/land cover, existing transportation facilities, above-ground utilities, and proposed facilities.

Appendices

Appendix A: Definitions

Iowa DOT's transportation districts: The Iowa Department of Transportation strives to better meet the needs of the public and the demands of an integrated transportation system. A total of seven district transportation planners have been named to provide planning coordination for areas of the state and generally coincide with the boundaries of regional planning affiliations (RPAs). The district transportation planner will generally be the “contact point” for questions and comments about planning and programming issues.

Iowa's Five-Year Transportation Improvement Program (Program): A document prepared by the Iowa DOT as required by Iowa Code 307.10. The Program shows the improvements proposed on Iowa's state highways during the next five years, using both federal and state funding. In addition to listing anticipated state highway improvement projects and state highway planning studies, the program identifies primary highway and local transit system projects, as well as programs for aviation, railroad, state and federal recreational trails; Revitalize Iowa's Sound Economy [RISE]; statewide Transportation Alternatives Program projects; Iowa Clean Air Attainment Program [ICAAP]; and Traffic and Safety, using both state and federal funding. State-sponsored projects within the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) are included in the Program. The Program does not include county road and city street improvements. Generally, it is approved by the Commission for publication in June of each year. The Program is the product of the second phase of transportation planning, and is reviewed and updated annually.

Metropolitan planning organization (MPO): MPOs are planning organizations, designated by federal law and established by the governor and local governments, to consider issues in urbanized areas with populations of 50,000 or more. MPOs vary in political structure, but usually include an overall governing body made up of local elected officials from city, county, state and other governmental entities. Each of Iowa's nine MPOs has also established a transportation policy committee and a transportation technical committee to address transportation planning and programming issues in the metropolitan area. Federal law requires that each MPO develop a metropolitan transportation plan and transportation improvement program.

Project development: The location and development phases of individual projects. Project development is the third stage of transportation planning.

Public hearing: A formal meeting that provides a governmental agency the opportunity to present information to the public and provides the public an opportunity to comment, both orally and in writing. Members of the public may individually present their comments. A transcript of the hearing proceedings and written correspondence is prepared. Public hearings are often used to involve the public in planning major highway projects. A public hearing is required for all projects that have an environmental document (environmental impact statement or environmental assessment).

Public information meeting: A less formal opportunity for governmental agencies to exchange information with the public and listen to their views. Informal public meetings range from large group meetings, where public discussion may be recorded and summarized, to open houses where information is exchanged but public comments may not be recorded.

Public participation: An open process that seeks and encourages continuous public involvement throughout the development of transportation plans, programs and projects.

Regional planning affiliation (RPA): The 18 RPA regions have been formed in Iowa to provide grassroots comments in the development of the long-range statewide transportation plan and STIP. All RPAs are set up along county lines, as established by the local governments in an area. Each RPA has established a transportation policy committee and a transportation technical committee to address planning and programming issues in the regional area. Each RPA is responsible for developing a regional transportation plan and regional transportation improvement program, which are incorporated into the State Transportation Plan and STIP.

State Transportation Plan: A document that describes the existing transportation system, identifies issues, discusses needs, provides policy direction, and defines the direction for planning and project development during the next 20-year period. The plan is the product of the earliest phase of transportation planning, and is viewed as the basis for the continuous planning process. The written plan will be revised periodically to reflect new developments.

Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP): The STIP is a document, which federal law requires each state to submit to the Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration for approval. The STIP is a list of all projects that are expected to be funded during the next three years using federal funds provided under federal law or, more specifically, under 23 U.S.C. § 450 and the Federal Transit Act. A state may submit a STIP that covers a longer period of time and includes regionally significant transportation projects not funded under federal law.

Transportation Alternatives Program activities: Federal law requires a certain portion of federal funds be used for activities that enhance the environmental, scenic or cultural quality of an area affected by a transportation facility. The federal regulations list activities that qualify for transportation enhancement funding.

Appendix B: Iowa DOT's Process for Nonmetropolitan Local Official Consultation

Introduction

The federal transportation funding legislation and subsequent planning guidance 23 CFR § 450 requires that each state must obtain comments concerning the effectiveness of the current process for consultation with nonmetropolitan local officials in their statewide planning process. These pages describe Iowa's method of consulting with nonmetropolitan local officials during development of the statewide transportation plan and the Statewide Transportation Improvement Plan (STIP). This process must be "separate and discrete" from Iowa's general public involvement process.

Federal requirements stipulate that the public has a 60-day period in which to review and comment on the State's method of consulting with non-metropolitan local officials. This comment period was initiated on October 26, 2015. A detailed description of the process was widely distributed throughout the state in the following manner.

- A press release was distributed to all Iowa Department of Transportation (DOT) media contacts.
- Copies of the process were sent to each of Iowa's 18 Regional Planning Affiliations (RPAs).
- Copies of the process were distributed to Iowa Cities and Counties through the Iowa DOT Local Systems mailing list.
- Copies of the process were sent to the Iowa League of Cities and Iowa State Association of Counties for distribution.
- The process was discussed at an MPO/RPA Quarterly meeting held on December 1.

Two public comments were received prior to the comment period closing on December 31, 2015. Each comment was positive regarding the documented process, and no changes were suggested. The remainder of this document documents the Iowa DOT's Formal Process for Non-Metropolitan Local Officials Consultation.

Definitions

Nonmetropolitan area: Includes all areas of the state that are located outside of Iowa's nine metropolitan areas (Ames, Des Moines, Council Bluffs, Dubuque, Iowa City, Waterloo, Cedar Rapids, Davenport and Sioux City).

Nonmetropolitan local officials: Elected and appointed officials of general purpose local government in nonmetropolitan areas with jurisdiction and responsibility for transportation. In Iowa, elected and appointed local officials are directly involved through the 18 regional planning affiliations (RPAs).

Consultation: The Iowa Department of Transportation will confer with nonmetropolitan local officials in accordance with the established process (described within this document). Prior to formal adoption of the State Transportation Plan and STIP, the Iowa DOT will consider the views of the nonmetropolitan local officials. Period updates will also be provided to the nonmetropolitan local officials.

Background

In 1991, President George H.W. Bush signed the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) that eliminated the distinct system level/jurisdictional funding programs. Congress established a new flexible program (Surface Transportation Program [STP]) with set-asides and substate distribution requirements to replace the distinct system level/jurisdictional funding programs. However, Congress intentionally did not allocate separate pots of money by jurisdiction. Congress appropriated these STP funds to be administered by each state; along with the flexibility to establish their own specific in-state planning/programming procedure.

The Iowa Transportation Commission (Commission) saw a unique opportunity to foster partnerships. The Commission wanted a regional planning process that was flexible, participatory, inclusive of nontraditional partners, proactive, and would provide better information to decision makers. The Commission used the framework that was already in place—annual regional transit development plans were prepared for the Iowa DOT by 16 existing regional agencies. The Commission designated these planning regions as the initial basis for organization. Local officials representing the cities and counties were provided the opportunity to choose from three options: remain in their current planning region, or join with another region, or join with other counties to form a new regional planning affiliation for transportation purposes. Counties took advantage of each option, resulting in 18 RPAs to conduct transportation planning and programming.

The Commission focused on flexibility in the execution of this regional transportation planning process. The Iowa State Association of Counties, League of Iowa Municipalities, and Iowa DOT staff presented a consensus recommendation to the Commission. The Commission formally adopted Iowa's State/Regional Transportation Planning Partnership, which directly involves elected and appointed local officials, in 1993.

With the new federal transportation bill (FAST Act), the Commission approved using a similar STP (now STBG) regional funding distribution process as was used under previous federal reauthorizations.

Federal STBG and State Planning and Research funds are distributed to Iowa's 18 RPAs (elected and appointed local officials serve on the RPA policy boards) for planning and programming purposes. These 18 RPAs cover all nonmetropolitan areas of the state.

Consultation process

Elected and appointed local officials have continual opportunities to be consulted on statewide transportation planning through their involvement in RPAs. Each RPA is required to have a policy board that includes elected and appointed local officials for the counties and cities within the region. These local elected and appointed officials are responsible for approving all plans and programs. A technical committee is also required, and is made up of professional staff, including engineers and planners, from member cities and counties.

Similar to any city or county within the region, the Meskwaki Settlement is invited to Region Six Planning Commission meetings and is encouraged to attend. They are also mailed application materials for STBG and TAP Set aside funds.

The Iowa DOT has seven district transportation planners who interact daily with various elected and appointed local officials. In addition, these planners also represent the department at the 18 individual RPA policy boards (which are comprised of elected and appointed officials) and technical committee meetings. Through the RPAs, the district planners continually keep the elected and appointed local officials informed as to the progress in developing the State Transportation Plan and STIP.

RPAs will be solicited for input during development of the State Transportation Plan. Additionally, the draft State Transportation Plan will be widely distributed throughout the state for comment. Each RPA Policy Board (comprised of elected and appointed officials) will be directly contacted concerning their comments on the draft plan.

Annually, the draft STIP is widely distributed throughout the state for comments. Each RPA (local officials) is directly contacted concerning their comments on the STIP.

The Iowa DOT holds quarterly meetings with the 18 RPAs as a group in Ames. These meetings are held to discuss a wide array of planning issues, particularly the development of RPA transportation plans, local transportation improvement programs (TIPs), STIP and State Transportation Plan.

Annually, each RPA policy board (comprised of elected and appointed officials) submits a transportation planning work program that outlines their proposed work for the year concerning updating their long-range transportation plan, development of their TIP, implementation of their public participation plan, and other transportation planning activities.

Each year four of twelve Commission meetings are held at locations around the state to provide public input opportunities. Local elected and appointed officials regularly participate in these meetings and discuss transportation planning/programming issues.

Continual communications are occurring between the Iowa DOT and RPAs, including such items as: transportation planning guidance, document/process reviews, training needs, funding and legislative updates, modal planning efforts, Census and data issues, and RPA reviews.

Iowa DOT central complex staff is in daily communications with elected and appointed local officials to address numerous transportation planning and programming issues.

Various public forums have been held and will continue to be held or sponsored by department. Elected officials such as mayors, council members and county supervisors are specifically invited to participate in these forums. Notice will also be provided to RPA staff.

The Iowa DOT is typically represented at the monthly Iowa Association of Regional Councils (IARC) meetings in Des Moines and is available to provide updates and answer questions. Any relevant transportation-related information from these meetings will be transmitted to RPA staff.

Results

The nonmetropolitan area local officials are consulted on a continuing basis by the Iowa Department of Transportation concerning statewide transportation planning and programming as mandated in 23 CFR Part 450.

Appendix 3: Iowa Department of Transportation Contacts

Statewide transportation plan

Systems Planning Bureau

800 Lincoln Way

Ames, Iowa 50010

Phone: 515-239-1664

https://www.iowadot.gov/systems_planning

Statewide Transportation Improvement Program

Program Management Bureau

800 Lincoln Way

Ames, Iowa 50010

Phone: 515-239-1661

https://www.iowadot.gov/program_management

Project development

Location and Environment Bureau

800 Lincoln Way

Ames, Iowa 50010

Phone: 515-239-1225

<https://www.iowadot.gov/ole/>

Public Transit Bureau

800 Lincoln Way

Ames, Iowa 50010

Phone: 515-239-1872

<https://www.iowadot.gov/transit/>

Rail Transportation

800 Lincoln Way Bureau

Ames, Iowa 50010

Phone: 515-239-1140

<https://www.iowadot.gov/iowarail/>

Aviation Bureau

800 Lincoln Way

Ames, Iowa 50010

Phone: 515-239-1691

<https://www.iowadot.gov/aviation>

Appendix 4: Local Contacts

Staffing at Metropolitan Planning Organizations and Regional Planning Organizations and their Iowa DOT District Planner support staff does change periodically. The Iowa Department of Transportation maintains a list of MPO and RPA representatives. For an up to date list of contacts at MPOs and RPAs in the state of Iowa, please contact:

Systems Planning Bureau

800 Lincoln Way

Ames, Iowa 50010

Phone: 515-239-1664

<https://iowadot.gov/transportation-development/systems-planning>

Appendix 5: Frequently Asked Questions

The following list of questions and answers is intended to serve as a “quick reference” guide about public involvement in the development of the State Transportation Plan and Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP).

Question: Who do I call if I have questions about the State Transportation Plan or STIP?

Answer: Members of the public are encouraged to phone, fax, email or submit written questions about the State Transportation Plan or STIP to the Iowa Department of Transportation's district transportation planner for the area in which they live. A map of the seven Iowa DOT's district transportation planner areas, along with address, phone and fax information, is shown in Appendix C: Iowa DOT contacts.

Question: Where will draft copies of materials be available for review?

Answer: Draft copies of materials will be available for public review and comment at the Iowa DOT's website: www.iowadot.gov. Copies will also be provided to regional planning affiliations, metropolitan planning organizations and state agencies.

Question: How do I have my name (or organization's name) added to or removed from the mailing list?

Answer: To add or remove a name, write or call the Iowa Department of Transportation, Program Management Bureau, 800 Lincoln Way, Ames, Iowa 50010, phone 515-239-1288 or email: shawn.majors@iowadot.us. If you wish to remove a name, it is helpful if you mail in a copy of the address label from the material you received.

Question: Where do I send written comments about the State Transportation Plan or STIP?

Answer: Written comments about the State Transportation Plan or STIP should be mailed to the Iowa DOT's district transportation planner for your area (see Appendix C).

Question: Who do I call to find out the schedule for upcoming Iowa Transportation Commission meetings?

Answer: Contact the Iowa DOT's district transportation planner for your area (see Appendix C).

Question: How will my comments be considered as the State Transportation Plan proceeds?

Answer: The Iowa DOT's district transportation planner will forward copies of all written comments about the plan update, and any written responses to those comments, to the director of the Iowa DOT's Systems Planning Bureau in Ames. The information will be provided to appropriate advisory committees and the Iowa Transportation Commission for consideration.

A summary of the public comments gathered through written comments or letters, listening public meetings, and Iowa Transportation Commission meetings will be made available to the public upon request.

Question: How will my comments be considered in the development of the STIP?

Answer: The Iowa DOT's district transportation planner will forward copies of all written comments about the STIP, and any written responses to those comments, to the director of the Iowa DOT's Program Management Bureau in Ames. The information will be shared with the Commission for consideration in development of the STIP.

A summary of public comments and responses to the comments will be distributed for public review along with the draft STIP. They will also be forwarded to the Federal Highway Administration for consideration prior to adoption of the STIP.

Appendix 6: Interpreters at the Iowa Department of Transportation

The Iowa Department of Transportation do have employees who have volunteered their time to interpret. They are not professional interpreters; therefore, if you need interpretation/translation that is critical, you are urged to hire a professional. Up to date lists of interpreters can be found at <https://iowadot.gov/civilrights/documents/iowaDOTTranslators.pdf>.