

Questions and Answers

MPO/RPA Quarterly
March 24, 2021



Q:

I received all the calendar invitations for the four quarterly meetings in 2021. I see they all have Microsoft Teams information, but I just wanted to confirm that all four meetings are slated to be virtual this year. Is that correct?

A:

Currently, meeting via Teams provides the best opportunity for full participation and right now, we are hopeful that the June quarterly meeting will be our last electronic meeting due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

It is also our hope that we will have updated information on social distancing, health guidelines, and how guests will be expected to interact within our facilities in the near future, allowing us to be back meeting in person at the September quarterly meeting.

Q:

Who is the correct contract for the Iowa Rideshare programs now?

A:

Brent Paulsen is the new Iowa Rideshare contact.

In fact, the Public Transit Bureau has hired two new employees since the last quarterly meeting:

- **Travis Estep:** Travis will be the Transit Grant Manager/Drug and Alcohol Specialist/Civil Rights Specialist for the Public Transit Bureau (this position was previously held by Sree Mitra before she became Transit Program Manager).
- **Becky Law:** Becky will be a Transit Program Administrator working alongside Brent Paulsen. Becky replaces Jeremy Johnson-Miller who recently left the DOT for another position.

Q:

I have reviewed the materials available on the DOT website and it appears as though nothing has changed with respect to the Swap (how it works, rules/regulations etc). Are you aware of any changes? Or is it just status quo on the DOT end of things?

A:

Nothing has changed for the regular swap program. The Transportation Commission approved some swap policy changes earlier this month but those had no impact on the regular swap program. The approved changes were to accommodate the allocation of COVID Relief funding to cities and counties in a timely manner.

Q:

I'm updating some of our online maps, and while the FHWA has not released the bridge data for 2020, can I request a GIS shapefile of the bridge data that was sent to FHWA on December 31, 2020?

A:

The Iowa DOT's Open Data Portal has the latest bridge information in a GIS shapefile for anyone wanting to access or download it. It is updated daily as inspections occur. You can access it and download it [here](#).

As far as the information that was sent to FHWA, [Scott Neubauer](#) in the Bridges & Structures Bureau may be able to help provide anyone with that particular GIS shapefile. Please contact Scott with questions related to their FHWA submittal.

Q:

(In response to a notice requesting comment on changing the Census definition for urban area) Doesn't the Iowa DOT use a different definition for an urban area, 5,000+? And will the Iowa DOT continue to use that definition?

A:

The FHWA methodology for distributing STBG funds uses 5,000 as the population benchmark. The Iowa DOT also uses the 5,000-population definition with the STBG targets.

New Census information will not change the current authorization bill. However, new Census information could be folded into a new federal long-term authorization bill and if FHWA were to change their methodology as a result of the Census changing their definition for an urban area, it could or would change how funds come to Iowa. Yet, the Iowa DOT Commissions approved methodology for STBG funding targets to RPAs does not have to follow FHWA's STBG methodology. For example, Iowa DOT staff could possibly recommend to the Iowa DOT Commission that STBG funding continue to be distributed to RPAs based on the 5,000-population benchmark.

To date, we have not had any discussions regarding the continued distribution of STBG funding based on the 5,000 population and whether that will continue or change as a result of the Census or FHWA changing their definition/methodology. Nevertheless, we will keep the agencies informed as a result of potential Census changes, FHWA methodology changes, and any Iowa DOT changes as we learn more about the possible changes to the urban area population definition and its impact on distributing STBG funding to RPAs.

Q:

A question came up during an internal meeting regarding offering translation services, in case we are asked. We are aware of a service the IA DOT offers, but we cannot find the specifics on it. Can you provide some information on the process, phone numbers we may need to call/include on meeting announcements, and what we need to do in case we are requested for translation services?

A:

I wish I had more information on this subject but I am not sure that our previous account with CTSLanguageLink is currently active. The Civil Rights Bureau is looking into it and I hope to have more information regarding translation services soon.

It does appear that CTSLanguageLink may have changed their name to Language Link and from what I have seen on their website, they do look like an active resource for various translation services. Planning agencies, whether through an Iowa DOT account or independently, will have subscription/service costs that the agency will be responsible for, so it may be worth checking out LanguageLink to see how services, availability, and prices are structured, as well as what would be available to you in short notice.

The language on your meeting and/or public notices should refer those who need special accommodations to contact your agency's phone number, as the agency is the one responsible for providing accommodations when requested. You may consider including a note that they request special accommodations two business days prior to the meeting, in order to allow the agency enough time to set up whatever accommodation is requested.

In the interim as we wait to see what Civil Rights finds out, another option would be to inquire with your local transit agencies and see who or what they are using for translation services.