

# **State of Iowa**

## **Formal Documentation of the Iowa Department of Transportation's Process for Non-Metropolitan Local Official Consultation**

December 19, 2003

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To the Citizens of Iowa:

The federal transportation funding legislation, TEA-21, and subsequent *Federal Register Rules and Regulations* (docket dated January 23, 2003) require that each state have in place (by February 2004) a documented process for consultation with non-metropolitan local officials in their statewide transportation planning process.

Attached is a draft copy of Iowa's documentation for the Iowa Department of Transportation's consultation process involving non-metropolitan local officials. This is being distributed throughout the state for public review and comment.

Your comments concerning Iowa's consultation process with non-metropolitan local officials are welcome. Please forward your comments by February 19, 2004, via E-mail to [amanda.martin@dot.state.ia.us](mailto:amanda.martin@dot.state.ia.us), by phone to 515-239-1210, or by mail to:

Amanda Martin  
Office of Systems Planning  
Iowa Department of Transportation  
800 Lincoln Way  
Ames, IA 50010

Thanks for your interest in transportation planning in Iowa.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The federal transportation funding legislation, TEA-21, and subsequent *Federal Register Rules and Regulations* (docket dated January 23, 2003) mandate that each state have in place (by February 2004) a documented process for consultation with non-metropolitan local officials in their statewide planning process. These pages describe Iowa's method of consulting with non-metropolitan local officials during development of the Statewide Transportation Plan and the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (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. Your comments concerning Iowa's consultation process are encouraged. Please forward your comments via E-mail to [amanda.martin@dot.state.ia.us](mailto:amanda.martin@dot.state.ia.us), by phone to 515-239-1210, or by mail to:

Amanda Martin  
Office of Systems Planning  
Iowa Department of Transportation  
800 Lincoln Way  
Ames, IA 50010

Comments must be received no later than Thursday, February 19, 2004.

Appropriate comments will be included in the final documentation of Iowa's consultation process, which will be submitted to FHWA and FTA prior to February 24, 2004.

## **DEFINITIONS**

- Non-metropolitan area---includes all areas of the state which are located outside of Iowa's nine (9) metropolitan areas (Ames, Des Moines, Council Bluffs, Dubuque, Iowa City, Waterloo, Cedar Rapids, Davenport and Sioux City).
- Non-metropolitan local officials---elected and appointed officials of general purpose local government in non-metropolitan 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 DOT will confer with non-metropolitan local officials in accordance with the established process (described within this

document). Prior to formal adoption of the State Long-Range Transportation Plan and the State Transportation Improvement Program, Iowa DOT will consider the views of the non-metropolitan local officials. Periodical updates will also be provided to the non-metropolitan local officials.

## **BACKGROUND**

In 1991 President Bush signed the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) which eliminated the distinct system level/jurisdictional FAP, FAS and FAUS funding programs. Congress established a new flexible program (STP) with set-asides and sub-state distribution requirements to replace FAP, FAS and FAUS. 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 saw a unique opportunity to foster partnerships. The Commission wanted a regional planning process that was flexible, participatory, inclusive of non-traditional 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 these existing 16 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, 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 a new federal transportation bill passed (TEA-21) in November 1998 the Commission approved using the same STP regional funding distribution process as was used under ISTEA.

Federal STP 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 non-metropolitan 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 local elected 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.
- The Mesquakie Indian Settlement has recently developed its transportation plan and the department provided review comments. Settlement officials are invited to Region 6 RPA meetings.
- The Iowa DOT has nine 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 local officials) and technical committee meetings. The district planners constantly keep the elected and appointed local officials (through the RPAs) informed as to the progress in developing the State Transportation Plan and the STIP.
- In addition, the department offered \$5,000 to each RPA policy board (comprised of elected and appointed local officials) to assist in providing regional information for inclusion in the State Transportation Plan. Iowa DOT staff has offered to meet with each RPA policy board (local officials) and/or technical committee to discuss the need for their local input into the planning process.
- Iowa DOT has created a sub-committee comprised of RPA representatives to specifically provide guidance as the State Transportation Plan is being developed over the next several months.
- The draft State Transportation Plan will be widely distributed throughout the state in the spring of 2004 for a comment period. Each RPA policy board (comprised of elected and appointed local 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 the State Transportation Plan, RPA Transportation Plans, STIP and local TIPs.
- The Iowa DOT is sponsoring a special statewide RPA meeting in February 2004. Policy board (elected and appointed local officials) and/or technical committee members are being invited to discuss how to improve the overall transportation planning process in Iowa.
- Annually, each RPA policy board (comprised of elected and appointed local 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.
- Each year four Commission meetings are held throughout the state. 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 the RPAs. For example, the first-ever comprehensive training needs survey was conducted on site for each of the 18 RPAs.
- Iowa DOT central complex staff are in communications daily with elected and appointed local officials to address numerous transportation planning and programming issues.
- Various public forums (Dr. Forkenbrock's nine strategic investment meetings held throughout the state and the Freight Roundtable discussions) are held or sponsored by the department. Elected officials such as mayors, council members, and county supervisors are specifically invited to participate in these forums.

## **RESULTS**

The non-metropolitan area local officials are consulted on a continuing basis by the Iowa Department of Transportation concerning statewide transportation planning and programming as mandated in TEA-21 and the *Federal Rules and Regulations* docket dated January 23, 2003.