
FISCAL UPDATE Article

Fiscal Services Division

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TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION MEETING — NOVEMBER 2023

The Transportation Commission met for an informal workshop on November 14, 2023, in Ames. The Commission discussed the following:

Department Welcome. The Iowa Department of Transportation (DOT) provided opening remarks. The DOT Director, Scott Marler, along with other DOT staff, was away attending a transportation conference in Indianapolis. The DOT noted that asphalt was placed along Interstate 80 construction zones and that there has been increased use of law enforcement to reduce speeding in construction zones along Interstate 80. The DOT additionally noted that last week, Iowa hosted the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators Region 3 conference in Des Moines.

Transportation Trends. The DOT provided the following updates:

- For U.S. railcar loads, the six-week moving average in September 2023 increased by 2.0% above the average in 2021 and 2022. This was the first increase in four months.
- Monthly passenger counts at Iowa's eight commercial service airports are currently higher than prepandemic levels, with the September 2023 monthly passenger counts higher than 2019 levels. This is a 1.3% increase compared to 2022.
- Monthly State vehicle miles of travel for September 2023 were lower than September 2019 but higher than September 2022 levels.

The DOT also gave a brief overview of the droughts affecting the Mississippi River and the Panama Canal, which are resulting in less cargo being shipped via these routes overall.

2024 Highway Program Balance Report. The Commission received an update on the FY 2024 Highway Program balance. The Program balance in October 2023 was negative \$12.9 million.

Revitalize Iowa's Sound Economy (RISE) Fund Project. The Commission received the following update on a RISE Fund project. The city of Cedar Rapids requested funding for a local development project for the realignment of approximately 534 feet of Arthur Collins Parkway to provide improved access to the commercial passenger terminal at the Eastern Iowa Airport. The recommended RISE Fund grant amount is approximately \$550,000.

Commercial Service Airport Terminals. During the 2023 Legislative Session, there was a new appropriation of \$10.0 million from the Rebuild Iowa Infrastructure Fund for FY 2024 to be awarded as grants for commercial service airport terminal improvements. Airports must provide 90.0% local match and cannot use federal funds for the match. The only applicant to meet the criteria is the Des Moines International Airport for a new passenger terminal building with a total project cost of \$113.7 million. The DOT recommendation for the grant to the Des Moines International Airport is \$10.0 million.

2025 Traffic Safety Improvement Program. The Traffic Safety Improvement Program (TSIP) was established by the 1987 Iowa Legislature to implement safety features to reduce fatalities and serious injuries. There are three funding categories: Site-Specific, Traffic Control Devices, and Studies and Outreach. Recommendations by category are as follows:

- Site-Specific: Recommendation for 5 applicants to be fully funded and 12 to be partially funded. The total recommended funding for all projects is \$4.8 million.
- Traffic Control Devices: Recommendation for 4 applicants to be fully funded and 10 to be partially funded. The total recommended funding for all projects is \$323,000.

- Studies and Outreach: Currently has \$500,000, which will be given out throughout the year.

Intercity Bus Grant Program. The Intercity Bus Grant Program is a federally funded program that supports intercity bus services that include stops in nonurbanized locations and make meaningful connections to nationwide networks. Funding is available to private intercity bus companies, companies wishing to start a bus service, public transit agencies operating or proposing to operate a bus service, and local communities wishing to support intercity connections to the community. Projects discussed and recommendations are as follows:

- Project 1: Over the Road Motor Coach, sponsored by Burlington Trailways. The project cost is \$800,000. The recommended award is \$680,000, or 85.0% of the total cost.
- Project 2: Over the Road Motor Coaches, sponsored by Jefferson Lines. The project cost is \$1.8 million. The recommended award is \$1.5 million, or 85.0% of the total cost.
- Project 3: Marketing, sponsored by Fort Dodge. The project cost is \$9,400. The recommended award is \$7,500, or 80.0% of the cost.

The Transportation Commission held a business meeting on November 14, 2023, in Ames. The Commission took the following actions:

Revitalize Iowa's Sound Economy (RISE) Fund Project. The Commission approved funding of \$550,000 to Cedar Rapids for construction of approximately 534 feet of Arthur Collins Parkway SW for improved access to commercial passenger terminals at the Eastern Iowa Airport.

Commercial Service Terminal Program. The Commission approved funding of \$10.0 million to Des Moines International Airport for terminal modernization.

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