
FISCAL UPDATE Article

Fiscal Services Division

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Des Moines, Iowa 50319

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TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION MEETING — DECEMBER 2023

The Transportation Commission met for an informal workshop on December 12, 2023, in Ames. The Commission discussed the following:

Department Welcome. The Iowa Department of Transportation (DOT) provided opening remarks. DOT director Scott Marler gave an update on DOT efforts to prioritize safer travel. Last month, members of the DOT attended a traffic safety summit in Kansas City with other states and the DOT established a workshop with construction and maintenance members for safer travel for all Iowans. Director Marler also announced that Iowa was awarded a discretionary grant from the federal government for Interstate 380 totaling \$57.3 million to improve access and mobility.

Transportation Trends. The DOT provided the following updates:

- For U.S. railcar loads, the six-week moving average in October 2023 was 2.2% above the average in October 2021 and 2022.
- Monthly passenger counts at Iowa's eight commercial service airports are currently higher than prepandemic levels, with the October 2023 monthly passenger counts higher than 2019 levels. This is a 1.1% increase compared to October 2022.
- Monthly State vehicle miles of travel for October 2023 were lower than October 2019 but higher than October 2022.

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. The drought is expected to continue throughout winter.

Budget Presentation. The DOT presented its budget for FY 2025. The total amount the DOT is requesting is \$453.2 million. 87.0% of the budget comes from the Primary Road Fund, and 13.0% comes from the Road Use Tax Fund. The DOT additionally is requesting \$8.9 million for from the Rebuild Iowa Infrastructure Fund.

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 \$7.5 million.

Commission Tours. In calendar year 2024, the Commission is planning four trips across Iowa to review project sites. The four cities are Cedar Rapids in April, Council Bluffs in June, Moravia/Honey Creek in August, and Decorah in October.

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 for projects 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 distributed throughout the year.

Iowa Clean Air Attainment Program. The purpose of the Iowa Clean Air Attainment Program (ICAAP) is to award funds to projects with the highest potential for reducing transportation-related congestion and air pollution. Five criteria are used to determine recommendations for funding. The ICAAP received six applications and recommended funding for four projects. The four projects include:

- **Traffic System Vehicle Detection Improvement Project, Phase 3**, sponsored by the city of West Des Moines. The total cost of the project is \$915,000. ICAAP recommended funding of \$732,000 or 80.0%.
- **Traffic Signal System Improvement**, sponsored by Polk County. The total cost of the project is \$633,000. The ICAAP recommended funding of \$506,000 or 80.0%.
- **Smart Traffic Routing with Efficient and Effective Traffic Signals, Phase 2**, sponsored by the city of Dubuque. The total cost of the project is \$2.3 million. The ICAAP recommended funding of \$1.1 million or 47%.
- **North Ankeny Boulevard/U.S. 69 Improvement from 1st Street to 11th Street**, sponsored by the city of Ankeny. The total cost of the project is \$6.2 million. The ICAAP recommended funding of \$1.7 million or 27.0%.

Federal Recreational Trails Program. The purpose of the Federal Recreational Trails Program is to develop and maintain recreational trails and trails related to facilities for both motorized and nonmotorized trail users. Fifteen applications were received and five are recommended for funding. The five projects include:

- **Snowmobile Trail Maintenance (Motorized)**, sponsored by the Iowa State Snowmobile Association. The total project cost is \$433,000, and recommended funding is \$346,000 or 80.0%.
- **Off-Highway Vehicle Park Equipment (Motorized)**, sponsored by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. The total project cost is \$425,000, and recommended funding is \$340,000 or 80.0%.
- **Support for Bicycle Summit (Nonmotorized)**, sponsored by the DOT. The total project cost is \$8,000, and recommended funding is \$6,000 or 80.0%.
- **Central Place Levee Trail Phase 1 (Nonmotorized)**, sponsored by the city of Des Moines. The total project cost is \$1.5 million, and recommended funding is \$500,000 or 33.0%.
- **Connecting Fort Maddison Phase IV 48th Street Trail Connector**, sponsored by the city of Fort Madison. The total project cost is \$631,000, and recommended funding is \$125,000 or 20.0%.

Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2023 Transit Program (Vehicle Replacement). This federal program is designed to help urban and growing communities acquire or replace public transit vehicles. The total award for Iowa is \$8.1 million for 16 transit systems and 52 vehicles.

FTA Bus/Bus Facilities and Low and No Emission Discretionary Grants. The Grants for Buses and Bus Facilities Competitive Program and the Low or No Emission Vehicle Program makes federal resources available to states and direct recipients to replace, rehabilitate, and purchase buses and related equipment and to construct bus-related facilities, including technological changes or innovations to modify low or no emission vehicles or facilities. Discretionary Awards to Iowa are as follows:

- FFY 2022 Bus Replacement Discretionary Award. Iowa received \$12.0 million for bus replacements.
- FFY 2022 Grants for Buses and Bus Facilities Discretionary Award. Iowa received \$15.8 million for bus facilities.
- FFY 2023 Grants for Buses and Bus Facilities Discretionary Award. Iowa received \$17.9 million for buses and bus facilities.

FY 2024 and FY 2025 State Transit Assistance Special Projects Program. This program is designed to help communities develop and improve public transit. A total of eight applications were received, and seven are recommended for funding. General Transit Feed Specification Contractor and lowarideshare.org Ridematching Software submitted two applications each. One in FY 2024 and another for FY 2025. The seven projects recommended for funding include:

- **Discretionary Bus Program Grant Project Administration (FY 2024)**, sponsored by the DOT. The total project cost is \$450,000, and recommended funding is \$90,000 or 20.0%.
- **General Transit Feed Specification Contractor (FY 2024)**, sponsored by the DOT. The total project cost is \$82,000, and recommended funding is \$82,000 or 100.0%.

- **General Transit Feed Specification Contractor (FY 2025)**, sponsored by the DOT. The total project cost is \$77,500, and recommended funding is \$77,500 or 100.0%.
- **lowarideshare.org Ridematching Software (FY 2024)**, sponsored by the DOT. The total project cost is \$40,000, and recommended funding is \$40,000 or 100.0%.
- **lowarideshare.org Ridematching Software (FY 2025)**, sponsored by the DOT. The total project cost is \$42,000, and recommended funding is \$42,000 or 100.0%.
- **Trip Connect — North Johnson County (FY 2025)**, sponsored by Corridor Rides Region 10. The total project cost is \$350,000, and recommended funding is \$175,000 or 49.9%.
- **Transit Economic Impact Study (FY 2025)** sponsored by Iowa Public Transit Association. The total project cost is \$25,000, and recommended funding is \$12,500 or 50.0%.

Iowa Interstate Investment Plan. The Iowa Interstate Investment Plan is a five-year plan designed to improve and modernize the Iowa interstate highway system. The Commission received workshop recommendations for stewardship, which technologies to consider first, and widening options. The Commission also received an update on current construction on the I-80 and I-35 interchange, which is expected to be completed in a few years. Additionally, the Commission received a report on the construction of a new bridge next to the Interstate 74 Bridge over the Mississippi River between Iowa and Illinois.

The Commission held a business meeting on December 12, 2023, in Ames. The Commission took the following action.

The Commission passed a motion to change the date of the informal and business meetings from January 10, 2024, to January 9, 2024.

2025 Traffic Safety Improvement Program. Approved funding for projects by the Commission are as follows:

- **Site-Specific:** Recommendation for 5 applicants to be fully funded and 12 to be partially funded. The total 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 funding for all projects is \$323,000.
- **Studies and Outreach:** Currently has \$500,000, which will be distributed 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 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. The following projects were discussed and approved by the Commission:

- **Project 1:** Over the Road Motor Coach, sponsored by Burlington Trailways. The project cost is \$800,000. The 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 award is \$1.5 million, or 85.0% of the total cost.
- **Project 3:** Marketing, sponsored by the city of Fort Dodge. The project cost is approximately \$9,000. The award is approximately \$8,000, or 80.0% of the cost.

Next Meeting. The next meeting of the Commission is scheduled for January 9, 2024, in Ames.

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