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## FISCAL UPDATE Article

Fiscal Services Division

May 28, 2024



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### TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION MEETING — MAY 2024

The Transportation Commission met for an informal workshop on May 14, 2024, in Ames. The Commission discussed the following:

**Department Welcome.** Iowa Department of Transportation (DOT) Director Scott Marler highlighted results from the 2024 Legislative Session and DOT-sponsored Acts. 2024 Iowa Acts, [HF 2185](#) (Vehicles Titles, Required Information Act), [HF 2186](#) (Right-of-Ways, Waivers for Small Areas of Disposal Act), [HF 2187](#) (Road Use Tax Fund Reporting Requirements Act), and [HF 2316](#) (Vehicles Requiring a Bond, Minimum Value Act) were all passed by the General Assembly and signed by the Governor. Director Marler also gave an update on two additional Acts, [SF 2109](#) (Minors Driving Permits Act) and [HF 2681](#) (Automated Traffic Enforcement, Speed Cameras Act), which have both been signed into law by the Governor. Director Marler then discussed [HF 2691](#) (FY 2025 Infrastructure Appropriations Act), which provides funding to recreational trails, public transit, the Railroad Revolving Loan and Grant Program, and commercial aviation and general aviation airport improvements.

Director Marler also discussed [SF 2385](#) (Boards and Commissions Act), which will make two changes to the Commission. The first change is adding the authority for the Commission to use ad hoc committees. The second change is that the Commission will decide how moneys are distributed to counties from the Secondary Road Fund and Farm-to-Market Fund.

**Administrative Rules.** The Commission discussed amendments to [761 IAC 529](#), [761 IAC 607](#), [761 IAC 800](#), [761 IAC 810](#), and [761 IAC 911](#), which require Commission approval. The amendments will reference federal rules and bring the administrative rules into compliance with federal law.

**Transportation Trends.** The DOT provided the following updates:

- For U.S. railcar loads, the six-week moving average in March 2024 fell by 3.5% compared to the previous year. This is due to the decrease in coal being shipped by rail.
- Monthly passenger counts at Iowa's eight commercial service airports are currently up year-over-year, with the March 2024 monthly passenger counts higher than March 2023 levels.
- Iowa FY 2023 public transit data shows an increase in use of public transit; however, current use is still below pre-pandemic levels.
- Monthly State vehicle miles of travel for March 2024 were lower than March 2019 but higher than March 2023.

The DOT also gave a brief overview of the droughts affecting the Mississippi River and the Panama Canal. The drought in the Mississippi River that started in September 2022 was declared over by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in February 2024. The Panama Canal is still in drought; however, with the arrival of the spring rainy season, the Canal is anticipated to increase maximum ship transit from 25 to 31 ships in May and then to 32 ships in June. Forty percent of all U.S. container traffic travels through the Panama Canal.

**2024 Highway Program Balance Report.** The Commission received an update on the FY 2024 Highway Program balance. The Program balance in April 2024 was negative \$22.7 million.

**June Commission Tour.** The Commission will tour the Council Bluffs, Melbourne, Red Oak, and Madison areas.

**Corridor Preservation Zone Renewal.** The Corridor Preservation Zone (CPZ) needs approval from the Commission to send out notices to city and county officials for comments on a renewal process. Corridor Preservation Zone Renewal is on I-380 from north of Swan Lake Road to County Road F12/120th.

**FFY 2023 Transit Program Amendment (Vehicle Replacement).** Due to decreased public transit use, fewer or smaller vehicles need to be procured for public transit, which left a surplus for the next fiscal year of \$2.2 million. It is recommended to use the additional funds to purchase seven new vehicles in four transit systems in Cedar Rapids, Iowa City, Sioux City, and Atlantic.

**Rural Pavement/Bridge Project Funding and Identification.** The Commission discussed the Highway Program funding categories, which are interstate stewardship, non-interstate pavement modernization, non-interstate bridge modernization, safety specific, non-interstate capacity/system enhancement, and major interstate capacity/system enhancement. The Commission's focus was on the non-interstate pavement modernization and non-interstate bridge modernization and different technologies used to modernize paved roads and bridges; what can cause distress; and how projects are selected for modernization. The Commission discussed funding allocations by district and project cycle.

**2025-2029 Iowa Transportation Improvement Program.** The Commission was presented a new draft for the 2025-2029 Iowa Transportation Improvement Program to be distributed to the public for comments. The only major changes compared to 2024-2028 Iowa Transportation Improvement Program are a \$100,000 decrease to the I-80 Scott County Middle Road Interchange and a \$400,000 increase to the I-35/I-235/I-80 Polk County Southwest Mixmaster. Iowa Highway stewardships have increased over time. The draft Program will need to be approved by the Commission in June.

The Commission held a business meeting on May 14, 2024, in Ames. The Commission took the following actions:

**Administrative Rules.** The Commission approved the amendments to 761 IAC 529, 761 IAC 607, 761 IAC 800, 761 IAC 810, and 761 IAC 911 to bring Iowa in compliance with federal regulation.

**Corridor Preservation Renewal.** The Commission approved the renewal process for the CPZ Renewal on I-380 from north of Swan Lake Road to County Road F12/120th.

**2025-2029 Iowa Transportation Improvement Program.** The Commission received more details on the draft plan and was informed that a press release will be issued soon. The DOT website will also have an area available for public comment, which will be shared with the Commission at the June meeting.

**Next Meeting.** The next meetings of the Commission are scheduled for June 10, 2024, and June 11, 2024, in Council Bluffs.

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Doc ID 1450192