
FISCAL UPDATE Article

Fiscal Services Division

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Ground Floor, State Capitol Building

Des Moines, Iowa 50319

515.281.3566

TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION MEETING — JUNE 2024

The Transportation Commission met for an informal workshop on June 10, 2024, in Council Bluffs. The Commission discussed the following:

Department Welcome. Iowa Department of Transportation (DOT) Director Scott Marler asked for a moment of silence to start the meeting for the loss of three DOT employees in the month of May. After a moment of silence, Director Marler then went on to discuss how the DOT mobilized to direct traffic control and debris removal after the recent storms. Director Marler also described DOT efforts in collecting damage costs for emergency relief funding for the affected communities. Director Marler also discussed the new roundabout interchange in District 3 that is set to start construction in 2026.

Transportation Trends. The DOT provided the following updates:

- For U.S. railcar loads, the six-week moving average in April 2024 fell by 2.0% 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 higher year over year, with the April 2024 monthly passenger counts higher than April 2023 levels but lower than March 2024.
- Monthly State vehicle miles of travel for April 2024 were lower than April 2023 but higher than March 2024.

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 ships 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 May 2024 was negative \$18.8 million.

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 will leave 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.

Revitalize Iowa's Sound Economy (RISE) Fund Project. The DOT gave an overview on a RISE Fund project for Fort Dodge. The project will construct a right turn lane on 5th Avenue South located in the southeast side of town, providing improved access to Nestle Purina Petcare Company in support of a plant expansion. The recommended RISE Fund grant amount is approximately \$344,000.

2025-2029 Iowa Transportation Improvement Program. The Commission was presented the 2025-2029 Iowa Transportation Improvement Program. The only major changes compared to the 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.

Commission Tour Report. The Commission discussed its tour of the new interstate highway that goes through Council Bluffs and new sign placement. The Commission also drove south along I-29 looking at various construction sites along different towns and roads in southwest Iowa.

The Commission held a business meeting on June 11, 2024, in Council Bluffs. The Commission took the following actions:

Department Welcome. Director Scott Marler thanked Commissioners Charese Yanney and Kathy Fehrman for their years on the Commission and awarded each a plaque.

Commission Tour Report. The Commission discussed its tour of the new Interstate highway that goes through Council Bluffs and new sign placement.

FFY 2023 Transit Program Amendment (Vehicle Replacement). The Commission approved the additional funds to purchase seven new vehicles in four transit systems in Cedar Rapids, Iowa City, Sioux City, and Atlantic.

Revitalize Iowa's Sound Economy (RISE) Fund Project. The Commission approved the RISE Fund grant amount of approximately \$344,000 for the Fort Dodge Immediate Opportunity project.

2025-2029 Iowa Transportation Improvement Program. The Commission approved the 2025-2029 Iowa Transportation Improvement Program.

Public Input Meeting. The Commission heard several comments from the public, including from the city of Council Bluffs, Southwest County Planning Council, Rural Pottawattamie County Infrastructure Projects, Metropolitan Planning Association, Senator Tom Shipley, staff for congressman Randy Feenstra, and Senator Joni Ernst.

Next Meeting. The next meetings of the Commission are scheduled for August 12, 2024, and August 13, 2024, in Moravia.

LSA Staff Contact: Garry Martin (515.281.4611) garry.martin@legis.iowa.gov

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