
FISCAL UPDATE Article

Fiscal Services Division

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TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION MEETING — JULY 2024

The Transportation Commission met for an informal workshop on July 9, 2024, in Ames. The Commission discussed the following:

Commission Input. Two new members on the Commission, Mary Gronen and Bill Anderson, introduced themselves to the Commission.

Department Welcome. The Iowa Department of Transportation (DOT) provided opening remarks. The DOT division members introduced themselves to the new members of the Commission. DOT Director Scott Marler discussed the recent floods in northwest Iowa. Director Marler said that the DOT has responded to the flooded communities by working to reopen roads and highways, removing material, and working with the U.S. Armed Forces to clear affected areas. The DOT updated the 511 System to show county road closures in addition to primary road closures to facilitate travel in flooded zones. DOT Field Operations Division Chief Engineer Tony Gustafson went into more detail about the flooded zones. Chief Engineer Gustafson shared photos of affected communities and the work the DOT and U.S. Armed Forces have been doing in the area. Chief Engineer Gustafson also stated that of the 49 original road closures at the start of the flooding, only 3 roads remain closed. A total of 2,880 loads of material needed to be removed from roadways due to the floods.

Commission Legal Overview. Assistant Attorney General (AAG) Shean Fletchall gave an overview to the Commission about the DOT legal counsel. AAG Fletchall explained the duties of the DOT legal counsel and how those changed under the State government realignment. According to AAG Fletchall the AAG role is to advise and represent the DOT on all legal matters. The AAG then reviewed the role of the DOT Director and the Transportation Commission under Iowa Code chapter [307A](#).

Review of Commission Guidebook. The Commission guidebook was created five years ago by the Commission to provide reference materials to the Commission members. The guidebook is updated annually in August by the Commission with updated contact materials and any changes that the Commission recommends.

Transportation Trends. The DOT provided the following updates:

- For U.S. railcar loads, the six-week moving average in May 2024 fell by 2.0% compared to the previous year. This is due to a 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 May 2024 monthly passenger counts higher than May 2023 levels but lower than April 2024.
- Monthly State vehicle miles of travel for May 2024 were lower than May 2023 but higher than April 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 Mississippi River is facing flooding conditions in some parts of the river. Some locks on the upper Mississippi River are closed or will be closed due to flooding until July 30, 2024. The Panama Canal is still in drought; however, with the arrival of the rainy season, the Canal has increased its maximum ship transit from 25 ships to 32 ships in June and is

scheduled to increase to 35 by August. 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 June 2024 was negative \$14.4 million.

August Commission Tour Review. In August, the Commission will take a tour of southeast Iowa. The tour will start at the Honey Creek Resort and travel along the US 34 corridor, then along US 69 and US 65, before making a stop at the Hy-Vee Distribution Center. Finally, it will follow IA 14, IA 2, and IA 5 before ending at Honey Creek Resort.

Revitalize Iowa's Sound Economy (RISE) Fund Project. The DOT gave an overview of the following RISE Fund project and RISE Fund reimbursement project settlement:

- RISE Fund project for Bondurant. The local development project will consist of the construction of offset left-turn lanes and traffic signalization of US 65 at Campus Drive on the east side of town. The recommended RISE Fund grant amount is approximately \$696,000.
- In 2017, North Liberty was awarded a total RISE Fund grant of \$3.1 million for an immediate opportunity project contingent on the creation of 307 new jobs. The roadway was opened in September 2019, and no jobs were created. The recommended reimbursement project settlement is \$1.1 million.

FY 2025 State Aviation Programs. There are three State Aviation Programs with individual applicants and projects that are recommended for grant funding.

- **Airport Improvement Program (AIP).** The AIP is funded by aviation fuel taxes and aircraft registration fees deposited into the State Aviation Fund. The AIP has 23 project applications. The DOT is recommending total funding of \$5.3 million. There were 23 applications that were accepted and recommended for funding.
- **General Aviation Vertical Infrastructure (GAVI).** The GAVI program is funded through the Rebuild Iowa Infrastructure Fund (RIIF). The GAVI program has six project applications. The DOT is recommending total funding of \$1.1 million.
- **Commercial Service Vertical Infrastructure (CSVI).** The CSVI program is funded through the RIIF. The CSVI program has eight project applications at eight commercial service airports. The DOT is recommending total funding of \$2.0 million.

More information on the projects for each program can be found [here](#).

The Commission held a business meeting on July 9, 2024, in Ames. The Commission took the following actions:

Election of Commission Officers. The Commission elected Sally Stutsman as Chair and Ray Gaesser as Vice Chair.

Approved Minutes. The Commission approved minutes from the Commission meeting held June 11, 2024, in Council Bluffs.

DOT Comments. Director Marler discussed road closures due to flooding. US 75 and IA Bridge 4 have been reopened.

RISE Fund Project. The Commission approved the following:

- A RISE Fund grant amount of approximately \$696,000 for the Bondurant local development project.
- A RISE Fund reimbursement project settlement with the city of North Liberty of approximately \$1.1 million.

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

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