
FISCAL UPDATE Article

Fiscal Services Division

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TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION MEETING — AUGUST 2024

The Transportation Commission met for an informal workshop on August 12, 2024, in Moravia. The Commission discussed the following:

- **Commission Input.** The Commission reviewed its tour of Interstate 35, Iowa Highway 5, and nearby rural roads. Along the tour, the Commission viewed the Hy-Vee distribution center in Cumming and drove along Highway 2, viewing Iowa scenic highways and byways.
- **Department Welcome.** Iowa Department of Transportation (DOT) Director Scott Marler thanked the District 5 team for arranging the tour for the Commission, which visited six counties in southeast Iowa. Director Marler also thanked the Commission for the memorial wreath that was provided to the family of a DOT employee who died in a motor vehicle accident while working. Director Marler stated that there have been 42 fewer traffic deaths compared to this time last year, stating, “This is a good sign, but we have more work to do to bring that number down to zero deaths.”
- **Commission Guidebook Review.** The Commission guidebook was created five years ago by the Commission to provide reference materials to Commission members. The guidebook is revised annually in August by the Commission to update contact materials and make any changes the Commission recommends.
- **Transportation Trends.** The DOT provided the following updates:
 - Railcar loads statistics will be provided on a quarterly basis instead of a monthly basis. For U.S. railcar loads, the six-week moving average in June 2024 fell by 4.5% compared to the previous year. This is due to a decrease in coal being shipped by rail.
 - The Canada Industrial Relations Board determined that a rail strike is allowable, which may affect Iowa rail loads if the strike happens on August 22, 2024.
 - Monthly passenger counts at Iowa’s eight commercial service airports are currently higher year over year, with the June 2024 monthly passenger counts higher than June 2023 levels.
 - Monthly State vehicle miles of travel for June 2024 were higher than June 2023 but lower than May 2024.

The DOT also gave a brief overview of the droughts affecting the Mississippi River and the Panama Canal. Along the Mississippi River, no locks are closed due to high water levels. Flooding impacts have ended. The Panama Canal is still in drought; however, with the arrival of the rainy season, the Canal has increased its maximum ship transit from 32 to 35 ships per day in August and is scheduled to increase to 36 by September. Normal levels are 36 to 38 ships per day. 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 July 2024 was negative \$12.1 million.
- **Proposed Amendment to the 2025-2029 Iowa Transportation Improvement Program.** The proposed amendment would move reconstruction projects on U.S. Highway 18 and Iowa Highway 3 forward in the timeline as both sustained damage due to the recent flooding.

- **FY 2025 State Aviation Program.** The DOT proposed approving two new applications for the FY 2025 State Aviation Program. The city of Boone withdrew two approved applications, and the DOT is recommending two applications to replace them. The new applications recommended by the Iowa DOT are:
 - Fort Dodge Regional Airport: Rehabilitate Taxiway. Total project cost is \$535,000. Recommended funding amount is \$375,000, or 75.0%.
 - Decorah Municipal Airport: Construct Hangar and Terminal. Total project cost is \$417,000. Recommended funding amount is \$300,000, or 72.0%.
- **Corridor Preservation Renewal.** The Location and Environment Bureau recommended the renewal of the Preservation Zone along the Gordon Drive viaduct from South Virginia Street to South Rustin Street in Sioux City, Iowa.
- **Public Transit Infrastructure Grant Program.** Total funds available for the Program are \$1.7 million. Five applicants applied for the Grant, and only four were accepted for FY 2025. The applicants accepted are as follows:
 - Sioux City Transit: Heat Pump Condenser Water Piping Replacement Project. The total Project cost is \$835,000. Recommended funding is \$600,000, or 72.0%.
 - North Iowa Area Council of Governments: Two-Bay Parking Garage for Indoor Storage. Total project cost is \$625,000. Recommended funding is \$500,000, or 80.0%.
 - River Bend Transit: Bus Storage Facility Project. Total project cost is \$137,000. Recommended funding is \$109,600, or 80.0%.
 - Ames Transit Agency: Bus Storage Fire Mitigation Upgrade. Total project cost is \$750,000. Recommended funding is \$511,300, or 68.0%.
- **Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2024 Transit Program (Vehicle Replacement).** There are three grant programs. The first two are 5339 Grant Programs for Bus and Bus Facilities (Urban and Non-urban), and the third is a Carbon Reduction Program. Total funding available is \$8.2 million for all three programs.
 - The grant programs receive a combined total funding of \$5.2 million for 10 transit systems and 30 vehicles.
 - The Carbon Reduction Program receive a combined total funding of \$3.0 million for 6 transit systems and 9 vehicles.Funds are distributed for bus replacement based on the Public Transit Management System (PTMS) process and availability of local match.
- **County Road Fund Distribution.** The enactment of 2024 Iowa Acts, [Senate File 2385](#) (Boards and Commissions Act), empowers the Commission to create ad hoc committees and the Secondary Road Fund and Farm-to-Market Fund. The Commission received an overview of the formulas used for distribution. The DOT recommended to the Commission to rescind chapter [102](#) in the Iowa Administrative Code and adopt a new chapter 103 (Secondary Road Fund and Distribution Methodology).
- **Revitalize Iowa's Sound Economy (RISE) Disaster Recovery Local Development Program.** The Commission heard a proposal to use RISE local development funds for disaster recovery funds. This would be allowed within counties included in the Proclamation of Disaster Emergency by the Governor or in a Presidential disaster emergency declaration within the previous 12 months. The Commission would need to vote to add the definition of Disaster Recovery Local Development to Commission policies. The Commission was also informed of uncommitted RISE funds available. City RISE funds available total \$13.5 million and county RISE funds available stand at \$3.8 million.

The Commission held a business meeting on August 13, 2024, in Moravia. The Commission took the following actions:

- **Commission Input.** The Commission members discussed the August 12, 2024, tour.
- **DOT Comments.** DOT director Scott Marler thanked the District 5 team for its assistance and for arranging the tour for the Commission members.
- **Commission Guidebook.** The Commission voted to approve the Commission Guidebook for the next fiscal year.

- **Proposed Amendment to the 2025-2029 Iowa Transportation Improvement Program.** The Commission voted to approve the amendment to the 2025-2029 Iowa Transportation Improvement Program.
- **Corridor Preservation Renewal.** The Commission voted to approve the renewal of the Preservation Zone in Sioux City.
- **FY 2025 State Aviation Program.** The Commission voted to approve the change of applicants to the FY 2025 State Aviation Program and approved funding for all applicants.
- **Commission Public Input.** The Commission heard from members of the public from the following organizations at the end of the business meeting:
 - City of Moravia
 - City of Centerville
 - Greater Ottumwa Partners in Progress
 - Representative Tom Determann
 - 10-15 Transit
 - Mahaska County
 - U.S. Highway 30 Coalition

Next Meeting. The next meeting of the Commission is scheduled for September 10, 2024, in Ames.

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