
FISCAL UPDATE Article

Fiscal Services Division

November 20, 2024



Ground Floor, State Capitol Building

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TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION MEETING — NOVEMBER 2024

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

- **Department Welcome.** Iowa Department of Transportation (DOT) Director Scott Marler introduced the new Chief Operating Officer, Melissa Gillett. Melissa Gillett has been with the DOT for 14 years and was previously the Motor Vehicle Division director. Director Marler also informed the Commission that the DOT attended two conferences last month. The first was in Pennsylvania, where state departments of transportation discussed reauthorization of the Surface Transportation Bill. The second conference was in Texas, where state departments of transportation discussed safety on roads and how best to improve safety.
- **Transportation Trends.** The DOT provided the following updates:
 - Railcar load statistics will be provided on a quarterly basis instead of a monthly basis. U.S. railcar loads in the third quarter of 2024 increased by 0.8% compared to the same quarter in the previous year.
 - Monthly passenger counts at Iowa's eight commercial service airports are currently higher year over year, with the September 2024 monthly passenger counts higher than September 2023 counts.
 - Monthly State vehicle miles of travel for September 2024 were higher than September 2023 but lower than August 2024.

The DOT also gave a brief overview of the droughts affecting the Mississippi River. It is expected that the water levels in the river will decrease. The low water levels limit the use of boats with larger drafts as well as the number of barges that can be towed.

- **2024 Highway Program Balance Report.** The Commission received an update on the FY 2024 Highway Program balance. The Program balance in October 2024 was \$-16.5 million.
- **Revitalize Iowa's Sound Economy (RISE) Program.** The Commission was informed of an immediate opportunity recommendation. The recommendation is sponsored by Jasper County. The project is for the paving of approximately 150 feet of South 128th Avenue East located southwest of Lynnville. The project's total cost is \$570,000. The DOT recommended providing a grant of \$285,000 or 50.0% of the total project cost.
- **State Recreational Trails Program Funding Recommendations.** The Commission received recommendations from the DOT for grants from the State Recreational Trails Program. Total state funding available in FY 2025 is \$3.5 million. The recommendations are:
 - **Neal Smith to High Trestle Trail Connector and Trailhead.** This project is sponsored by Polk County. The total cost of the project is \$1.7 million. The DOT recommended a grant of \$700,000 or 40.0% of the total project cost.
 - **Clay County Connection Phase 2.** The DOT project is sponsored by Dickinson County. The total cost of the project is \$1.5 million. The DOT recommended a grant of \$520,000 or 35.0% of the total project cost.
 - **Pony Hollow Trail Extension Phase 1.** This project is sponsored by the Clayton County Conservation Board. The cost of the project is \$1.1 million. The DOT recommended a grant of \$325,000 or 30.0% of the total project cost.
 - **Jewellsworth Trail Acquisition.** This project is sponsored by the Hamilton County Conservation Board. The total cost of the project is \$257,000. The DOT recommended a grant of \$180,000 or 70.0% of the total project cost.

- **Iowa River's Edge Trail Resurfacing and Bridge Replacement.** This project is sponsored by Hardin County. The total cost of the project is \$4.0 million. The DOT recommended a grant of \$745,000 or 19.0% of the total project cost.
- **Carlson Park Trail Development.** This project is sponsored by the city of Decorah. The total cost of the project is \$499,000. The DOT recommended a grant of \$299,000 or 60.0% of the total project cost.
- **Bentonsport Bridge Rehab.** This project is sponsored by the Van Buren County Conservation Board. The total cost of the project is \$2.0 million. The DOT recommended a grant of \$403,000 or 20.0% of the total project cost.
- **Flint River Trail Connection.** This project is sponsored by the city of Burlington. The total cost of the project is \$96,000. The DOT recommended a grant of \$72,000 or 75.0% of the total project cost.
- **Pioneer Trail Reinbeck Gap.** This project is sponsored by the Grundy County Conservation Board. The total cost of the project is \$1.1 million. The DOT recommended a grant of \$280,000 or 25.0% of the total project cost.
- **FY 2026 Traffic Safety Improvement Program.** The Commission received funding recommendations for the Traffic Safety Improvement Program. Funding categories are split into three categories: site-specific improvements, traffic control devices, and studies and outreach. The funding recommendations for each category are as follows:
 - **Site-Specific Improvements.** Twenty applications were received for site-specific improvement projects. The DOT recommended grants totaling \$7.6 million.
 - **Traffic Control Devices.** Fourteen applications were received for traffic control devices projects. The DOT recommended grants totaling \$498,000.
 - **Studies and Outreach.** One application was received for a studies and outreach project. The DOT recommended a grant totaling \$500,000.
- **Calendar Year (CY) 2025 Intercity Bus Grant Program.** The Commission received funding recommendations for the CY 2025 Intercity Bus Grant Program. Total available funding is \$3.5 million.
 - **Burlington Trailways.** The total cost of the project is \$2.4 million. The DOT recommended a grant of \$1.4 million.
 - **Greyhound Lines.** The total cost of the project is \$854,000. The DOT recommended a grant of \$66,000.
 - **Jefferson Lines.** The total cost of the project is \$3.7 million. The DOT recommended a grant of \$690,000.
 - **City of Fort Dodge.** This project is a marketing project and not a bus line. The total cost of the project is \$9,000. The DOT recommended a grant of \$8,000.
- **Project Prioritization.** The Commission received information on Project Prioritization for the Highway Program. Project Prioritization is an application that was conceived in 2015 in response to an overflow of larger-capacity improvement projects and not enough resources to complete them all. The application uses seven criteria for determination. The criteria are safety, roadway class, freight, pavement, bridge, traffic, and mobility.

The Commission held a business meeting on November 12, 2024, in Ames. The Commission took the following actions:

- **Approved Minutes.** The Commission approved the minutes from the last meeting on November 12, 2024.
- **Revitalize Iowa's Sound Economy Disaster Recovery Local Development Program.** The Commission approved the funding recommendation of \$285,000 for a paving project in Jasper County.
- **State Recreational Trails Program Funding.** The Commission approved all funding recommendations for the State Recreational Trails Program.

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

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