



Iowa County Engineers Association Service Bureau



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MEMORANDUM OF TRANSMITTAL

From: Brian P. Moore, P.E., Executive Director

To: Governor of Iowa
Iowa State Transportation Commission
Chief Clerk of the Iowa House of Representatives
Secretary of the Iowa Senate
Iowa County Engineers

Date: January 19, 2024

Ref: Report of activities for 2023

Per Iowa Code Section 312.3B, the Service Bureau is required to file an annual report of its activities with the parties identified above.

We respectfully submit the 2023 edition of this report, listing our major functions and special activities.

Questions and comments regarding the report should be directed to: Brian P. Moore, PE at 515-244-0779 or to brian.moore@iceasb.org



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ANNUAL REPORT of ACTIVITIES – for 2023

The Iowa County Engineers Association Service Bureau, ICEASB, is a small, 28-E agreement agency serving Iowa's 99 county road departments. Formed in 1998, the Bureau operates from office space sub-leased from the Iowa State Association of Counties in West Des Moines. It provides a variety of support and data services to Iowa secondary road departments and Iowa DOT via the Internet. A Board of directors consisting of county engineers and county supervisors sets policies and establishes budgets.

This report is filed to satisfy the requirements of Iowa Code Chapter 312.3B.

GENERAL OPERATIONS:

The majority of the Bureau's services are delivered via several websites: one that's exclusively designed to serve county road department personnel. A second that provides project programming and development tracking services to all local road agencies in the state. A final website, added in 2016, provides the public and media with information about and connections to county roads and engineers.

Main County Engineers' website – www.iceasb.org (Password protected)

- News and updates area

This section notifies county engineers of news and events that affect county roads. A headlines area alerts engineers and staff of regulations, training availability, legislative action, and related information. 98 headlines, notices, updates and reminders were published in 2023, along with 41 calendar events, 99 data files, and 56 job opening notices.

- Find and Contact (communications) area

This part of the website provides county engineers with the means to find each other, make contact, ask questions and share knowledge. It is the most valuable and frequently used service area. County staff members can broadcast questions and obtain guidance from their peers, look each other up and send emails or faxes, find and communicate with DOT personnel, send messages to committees, and check on contractor pre-qualifications online. 139 questions were posted, generating 1071 replies. An additional 17 surveys went through a system that enables secondary road staff to develop surveys, which generated 641 survey responses to better help each other solve problems.

- Downloads area

Another service is that of providing an on-line library of forms, documents, data tabulations, and computer aided design files. Access to these items permits people to eliminate storing paper forms and assures them of always having the latest permit form, model resolution, or CADD detail. The download area contains over 1720 items in 25 categories.

- Online tools

Provides counties with automated, on-line tools for filing annual reports, year-end salary survey, electronic polls & surveys, road closure notification system, posting of local letting notices, GASB-34

Infrastructure reporting, and on-line GIS based mapping. This includes a full local letting support tool (160 lettings in 2023) and a local project pay voucher tool (55 projects / \$6,378,864 in payments processed). A GASB-34 depreciation calculation system tracks 12,806 past projects. The road closure notification tool was used for 1,815 road construction / maintenance events and generated 47,770 notices to public safety, school, media and businesses, through a combination of email, fax, and text notifications. Work Orders application was used by 80 counties, Sign application was used by 65 counties, Culvert application was used by 38 counties.

Transportation Program Management System (TPMS) www.tpms.org (Password protected)

TPMS, provides a statewide framework for project programming and project development tracking. It links and assists the various parties involved in these activities: cities, counties, consultants, DOT district local systems staff, DOT district planners, RPAs, MPOs, and others. The new TPMS 2020 application was deployed in July of 2021. It exchanges data on Local Public Agency projects in real time with the DOT's new programming and project management system, MasterWorks, and a periodic electronic update process keeps TPMS' and DOT's STIP records synchronized. In 2023, there were 2,649 projects contained in County Five-year programs, including 1,234 Federal-Aid and 153 Federal-Aid SWAP projects identified in the State Transportation Improvement Plan, (STIP). Approximately 342 were in development tracking and 266 reached letting status in 2023.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

Along with the general operations, the Bureau performed a number of special projects and upgrades during 2023:

- a) Performed research and conducted polls, as requested, to assist ICEA leadership respond to legislative inquiries and initiatives.
- b) Calculated and communicated Secondary Road and FM fund distribution factors for FY23, FY24 and FY25.
- c) Published copies of county engineer conference presentations for access and review by engineers after the meetings.
- d) Maintained a calendar of events to keep people aware of upcoming meetings / training sessions / conferences – with links to each event's agenda & registration.
- e) Prepared system for and extracted summaries from: Annual reports, Salary Survey, summer employment prospects, and committee assignment requests.
- f) Used methodology developed in Highway Research project TR-608 to determine base needs of secondary roads - broken down by bridges vs. roadways for four surface classes.
- g) Held in person trainings for 140 county road department staff around the state to train them on use of Work Orders, Sign Inventory, and other applications and provided new county engineer orientation presentations for several.
- h) Served as base of operations for Iowa's Secondary Roads Research Engineer, who helps counties identify needs, conduct research, and implement findings that improve road/bridge construction and maintenance.
- i) Worked with Iowa Once Call to establish, monitor, and update protocols for automating issuance of underground facility locate requests direct from the county engineer work orders application.
- j) Created and supported all new re-write for TPMS Development module and collaborated with Iowa DOT on the newly developed TPMS and MasterWorks data exchange via modern API technologies. Continued support on the new redesigned county project programming and budgeting application.

- k) Continued work on the new Operations Management System (OMS). Created and deployed a time tracking module for counties to collect hours and track work performed electronically. Time tracking module consists of electronic time clock in/out, reimbursement requests and approvals, time policies and time sheets. Future OMS tracking modules include Equipment Tracking, Inventory Tracking, and Communications components. 14 counties started using OMS Time Tracking in 2023.
- l) Developed and in November, deployed a new text-based Call Out application. This application allows county road departments to call out employees by text messaging to report to work due to winter weather. 20 counties used the application generating 870 notifications.
- m) The ICEA public information website continues to be maintained and resides on the ICEA Service Bureau servers. The public information website can be accessed at: www.iowacountyroads.org (Public site).

AGENCY OPERATIONS EFFECTED BY COVID-19 IN 2023

In March of 2020, at the first indication of COVID-19 pandemic disruptions, it was unclear of what effect COVID-19 would have on the ICEA Service Bureau operations and business functions. In mid-March, the normal office workspace was vacated by the employees with the hopes of returning sometime during the year. Given the agencies largely technology-based functions, we were able to resume our normal operations by relocating to home based work locations and accessing necessary network infrastructure remotely, after only a brief transition period. Fortunately, there was no loss of service or support for critical users of the system.

Employees returned to a normal in-office schedule in 2022. Currently, employees work a hybrid schedule with 75% of their time spent in the office. In either case, the team is in constant communication through open web-based communication channels.

The Secondary Roads Research Engineer, (SRRE), identifies, coordinates, plans, supervises and reports on research projects undertaken to improve road/bridge materials, technologies, construction and maintenance. The SRRE visits counties to learn of and help launch research projects. The SRRE also interacts with the academic community to coordinate the work, represents Iowa's interests on national boards, and actively helps counties turn findings into actions.

For 2023, the SRRE undertook the following tasks: field reviews in more than 40 counties, 7 posting of research news on the county engineer website, assisted in approximately 28 Technical Advisory Committees, oversaw 16 new IHRB project startups, and kept in contact with some 40 active research projects. The annual County Engineers' Research Focus Group meeting was held on May 4th this year and the SRRE was available for some on-site project visits and to all counties through virtual on-line meetings. The SRRE began a collaborative effort at Camp Dodge with the National Guard, ISU InTrans Motor Grader Operator (MOGO) training program, ISU geotechnical department and select counties to "rebuild" granular roads with stabilization of the base using county crews, county equipment and county ideas to improve roadways in Camp Dodge. This endeavor created a scenario where counties could teach the National Guard processes to maintain roadways in a more effective manner, let county personnel perform improvements in a controlled environment they can take back and implement in their counties and perform research that will benefit counties in roadway maintenance.

The Service Bureau added the position of State Planning and Research Engineer, (SPRE) in 2020, to assist in the effort to coordinate state, regional, and national research with local research activities through the Iowa Highway Research Board, IHRB.

A new federal transportation bill (BIL) was passed in 2022. This new bill created several new funding programs and levels never seen before available to counties. These new funding programs are based upon grants and require a lot of time to understand the programs, write competitive applications, and administer federal aid grant awards. To accomplish this efficiently, a single person was needed to coordinate this effort. To provide this service for the counties, the Service Bureau created a new position in 2023 and hired a Discretionary Grant Coordinator (DGC).

The DGC reports directly to the Service Bureau Executive Director, acting as the primary contact for grant applicants, grant recipients, grant writers, consultants and all others involved in Iowa County Engineers Association (ICEA) grant applications. The DGC collaborates with the ICEA Grant Committee, Iowa DOT, and Iowa FHWA to oversee and executes all elements of the discretionary grants, their applications, and reporting for any and all Federal and State grants submitted by ICEA. The DGC led the effort for the submittal and award of the 2023 RAISE Grant (\$24.76 Million for 9 county bridges); submittal of 2023 RURAL Grant (\$29.62 Million for 6 county road projects); Implementation of the awarded 2022 SS4A Grant (\$2 Million to complete 97 county Safety Action Plans).