

Budget Unit Brief

FY 2017



Weight Enforcement Scale Replacement

Purpose and History

National weight standards apply to commercial vehicle operations on the U.S. Interstate Highway System. The System includes approximately 40,000 miles of limited access, divided highways that span the nation. States are allowed to set their own commercial vehicle weight standards for roads not included in the Interstate Highway System. The utilization of weight enforcement scales by the Iowa Department of Transportation (DOT) Motor Vehicle Enforcement (MVE) is a method to administer vehicle size and weight laws in the state. The purpose of a commercial vehicle weighing program is to enforce legal load limits to prevent vehicles from damaging highways and bridges. The DOT weight enforcement program is balanced between the use of permanent weigh scale sites and portable weigh scales.

There are 12 scale locations in Iowa. As of July 2012, five scales had been identified by the DOT as currently in need of replacement due to age and condition. Typically, scales are 40 feet or 90 feet in length. The expected service life a scale is 15 years. The current DOT practice is to replace scales that have aged beyond the expected service life or deteriorated beyond proper usage.

State Funding for Scale Replacement

All funding for scale replacement is appropriated from the Road Use Tax Fund (RUTF). In general, the DOT requests an average cost for scale replacement each year ranging from \$350,000 to \$550,000. Typically, two scales are replaced per year and the amount requested by the DOT reflects the average cost for replacing one large 90-foot scale and one smaller 40-foot scale. An averaging method is used for determining the annual funding because each scale site is unique with specific issues that need to be considered when a scale is replaced. For example, there may be soil issues, shifting of concrete in the existing scale pit, or old cisterns and wells discovered under the pit site. These types of issues can result in cost variances. Additionally, the DOT has been exploring virtual scale technology improvements during replacements that involve the use of sensors and cameras on the scales, and this is a contributor to cost.

Related Statutes and Administrative Rules

Iowa Code section [327D.129](#)

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More Information

Iowa DOT MVE Scale Locations: <http://www.iowadot.gov/mvd/omve/scales.htm>

Iowa General Assembly: <http://www.legis.iowa.gov/index.aspx>

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