

Budget Unit Brief

FY 2017



Road and Weather Condition Information

Purpose and History

The Iowa 511 Travel Information System provides a phone number for travelers to receive weather-related road conditions, traffic incidents, and highway construction information, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. In July 2000, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) designated "511" as the single travel information telephone number to be made available to states and local jurisdictions. A consortium of states pooled costs to develop their specific 511 systems. They include Iowa, Alaska, Kentucky, Maine, Minnesota, New Hampshire, New Mexico, and Vermont. The Federal Highway Administration provided initial funding of \$700,000 to the consortium of states to develop and design the System, and the states provided 20.0% in matching funds. The Iowa 511 System includes interstates, U.S. routes, and portions of some state highways. The System currently does not include county roads or city streets. System upgrades will include a breakdown of major travel routes into small segments so that motorists can more accurately review the road conditions as changes occur.

The Iowa 511 is a public service. There is no charge to Iowa wireline users. Wireless users pay normal airtime and roaming charges, according to their wireless service contracts. The System identifies the caller's telephone prefix when calling from a wireline phone. The System identifies the communications tower utilized by a wireless caller and provides information specific to the area of the state where the call originates.

Funding History

Funding for the maintenance of the computers and communication equipment for the 511 System is appropriated from the Road Use Tax Fund. The appropriation is included in the Transportation Appropriations Bill under the purview of the Transportation, Infrastructure, and Capitals Appropriations Subcommittee. The appropriation is transferred from the Department of Transportation (DOT) to the Iowa State Patrol in the Department of Public Safety for that purpose. Most of the funding is used to maintain the equipment. The Iowa State Patrol, however, uses a portion of the 511 System appropriation for promotional items including Patrol Safety Education Programs in schools and communities. Since 1999, this appropriation has remained constant at \$100,000 per year.

Related Statutes

Annual Transportation Appropriations Act

Revised September 7, 2016

More Information

DOT Travel Information: <http://www.511ia.org/>

Iowa General Assembly: <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/>

LSA Staff Contact: Adam Broich (515-281-8223) adam.broich@legis.iowa.gov