

# What's Happening

*For Community Leaders*

September/October 2019

## Sarpy County I-80 Interchange Study will start soon

A planning study will soon be underway for a proposed new interchange along Interstate 80 in western Sarpy County.

The Planning and Environmental Linkage (PEL) study, coordinated by MAPA in partnership with Sarpy County, the Cities of Papillion and Gretna, the Nebraska Department of Transportation (NDOT) and the Federal Highway Administration, will identify the location between the Nebraska Highway 31 and Highway 370 interchanges.

MAPA's Metropolitan Area Travel Improvement Study (MTIS) with the NDOT recommended an interchange be located in the area of 180th to 192nd Street on I-80.

The recommendation in the MTIS for an additional interchange is based on the need to relieve traffic congestion at the existing interchanges located at Hwy 31 and Hwy 370 on I-80.

"Northwestern Sarpy and Douglas Counties are growing rapidly, literally in leaps and bounds. Dozens of new housing developments, in addition to commercial and industrial developments, are being planned and constructed," said Don Kelly, Sarpy County Board Chairman.

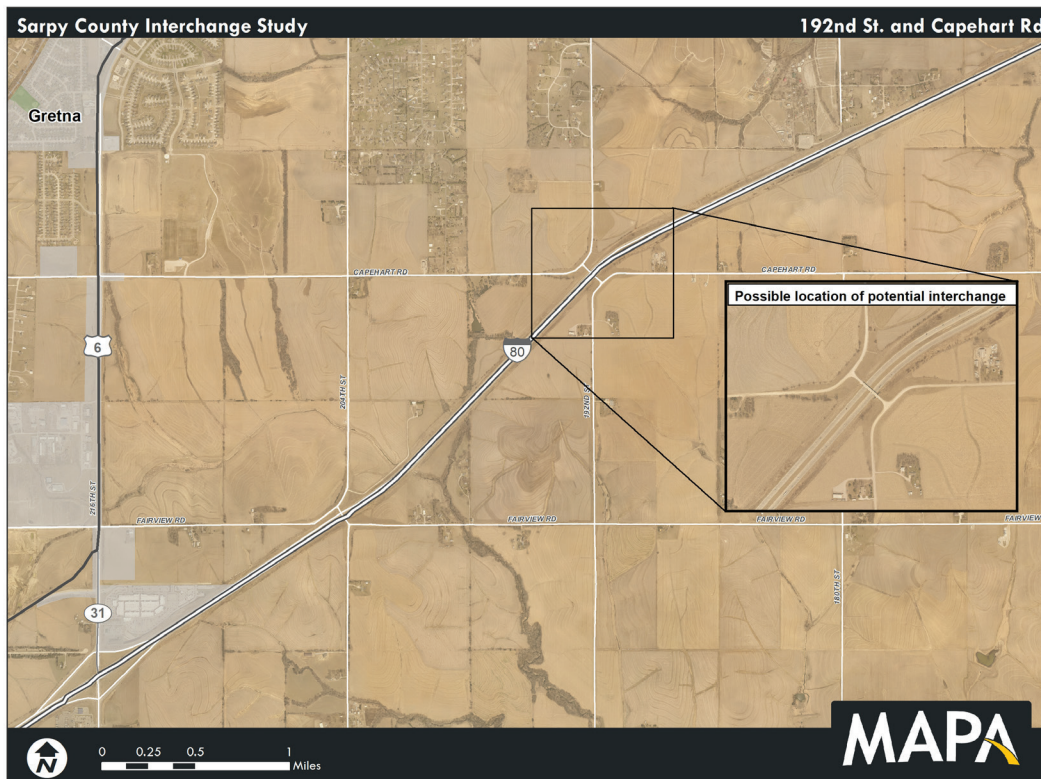
The MTIS also points to the expectation that a new interchange would divert enough traffic from Hwy 31 between I-80 and Gretna to eliminate the need to widen that state highway to six lanes.

"Providing access to major transportation routes is critically important to our newest Sarpy County residents and businesses. Our proposed Interstate interchange also provides the foundation for a North-South corridor that will benefit everyone," said Kelly.

The PEL is intended to document the purpose and need for a new interchange, develop and screen a range of reasonable alternatives, identify a preferred alternative and inform the environmental review process. The PEL is expected to identify any additional steps which need to be taken to update local comprehensive plans to be consistent with the recommendations of the study.



A MAPA drone photo of I-80 and 192nd Street in the study area.




# ConnectGO Partnership

ConnectGO is an initiative between the Greater Omaha Chamber, MAPA and the Smart Cities coalition to unite the people and businesses of Greater Omaha around shared goals for our region focusing on equitable, accessible and modern transportation. It launched publicly in August 2019. The members of this initiative are working with the public to develop a transportation strategy, which is expected to be completed in 2020.


This initiative aligns with the work MAPA has been performing the past few years through its Metro Area Travel Improvement Study (MTIS) with the Nebraska Department of Transportation (NDOT). The MTIS examined ways to improve the Omaha metro area's transportation systems. It identified nearly \$7.5 billion in investments for the interstate system and transit in the Omaha metro.

ConnectGO coincides with and will inform the update to MAPA's Long Range Transportation (LRTP) which is expected to be completed in 2020. The LRTP is updated every five years and it projects regional transportation needs for a 25-year period.



 The Iowa Flood Mitigation Board awarded funding to the City of Pacific Junction and Mills County to supplement a buyout program for flood-damaged homes.



 The funding will pay for foreclosure and mortgage assistance until buyouts can take place.

The board allocated more than  
**\$3.1 million**  
to the City of Pacific Junction.

The board allocated more than  
**\$2.3 million**  
to Mills County for flooding recovery assistance.

Of that funding, the board awarded the City more than  
**\$1 million**  
so far for interim mortgage assistance, home appraisals and administration costs.

Of the funding allocated to Mills County, the board awarded  
**\$913,000** so far.

MAPA hired a Recovery Coordinator recently to assist with Pacific Junction's flood recovery efforts. A second position may be added if needed.

## Better Block Workshop works to enhance pedestrian experience

On Sept. 16 and 17, Heartland 2050 and AARP Nebraska partnered to bring Team Better Block and its co-founder, Andrew Howard, to the metro to work on enhancing the pedestrian experience and driving community engagement. Team Better Block consists of urban planning experts who specialize in activating the creativity of residents to design public spaces that create community, connection and commerce.

An AARP technical assistance grant funded the Team Better Block visit. AARP's Livable Communities Initiative works at the local level to provide safe, walkable, age-friendly housing and transportation options, access to needed services, and opportunities for residents of all ages to participate in community life.



At a Sept. 16 workshop, Howard presented the Better Block Approach that is used in more than 200 cities around the world.



Howard also consulted with community leaders in three different metro area locations on the benefits of redesigning spaces for people and building connections between organizations in the community. Possible actions include temporary street treatments that reduce traffic noise and activating vacant spaces to create more social engagement.

# Blair Workforce Housing Dedication



Blair Mayor Richard Hansen cuts the ribbon Aug. 29 at the dedication of the first set of workforce housing homes built on Transformation Hill on the former Dana College campus. Proceeds from the home sales will go back into MAPA's Revolving Loan Fund to start the next round of speculative home construction.

## MAPA presents 2019 Annual Awards

MAPA's Council of Officials announced its annual awards at its annual dinner meeting Oct. 9.

Senator Justin Wayne of Omaha received MAPA's 2019 Regional Citizenship Award while the Loess Hills Parks to People Region received MAPA's 2019 Regional Service Award and RDG Planning and Design Principal Marty Shukert, a past director of the City of Omaha's Planning Department, received MAPA's Award of Merit.

Shukert will receive the Award of Merit at MAPA's Dec. 12 Council of Officials luncheon meeting.

Senator Wayne received the Regional Citizenship Award for sponsoring and prioritizing LB492, the Regional Metropolitan Transit Authority Act, which allows Metro to expand to a regional entity beyond its geographical limits within the City of Omaha.

The Loess Hills Missouri Rivers Parks to People regional effort received the Regional Service Award for working to promote and enhance the culture, nature and community in the Loess Hills region. Since 2015, this collaborative effort, coordinated by Golden

Hills Resource Conservation and Development, has resulted in eight priority projects in Pottawattamie, Mills and Harrison Counties. They include Frontier Iowa Trails, a regional multi-use trails network, new cabin construction at county parks and recreation areas, and Brent's Trail, a new eight-mile hiking trail through the Loess Hills in Harrison County.



Omaha Senator Justin Wayne receives MAPA's 2019 Regional Citizen Award at the Council of Officials Annual Dinner Meeting in Blair, Nebraska.



Michelle Wodtke-Franks, executive director of Golden Hills RC&D, receives MAPA's 2019 Regional Service Award.

## CALENDAR

### November 2019

- Nov. 1st – All Saints' Day
- Nov. 3rd – Daylight Saving Time ends  
Set clocks back one hour
- Nov. 5th – General Election
- Nov. 11th – Veterans Day observed  
MAPA offices closed
- Nov. 13th – RPA-18  
11:00 a.m.
- Nov. 20th – Coordinated Transit  
10:30 a.m.
- Nov. 28th – Thanksgiving Day  
MAPA offices closed
- Nov. 29th – MAPA offices closed

### December 2019

- Dec. 4th – Finance Committee  
8:30 a.m.
- Dec. 5th – Heartland 2050 Regional  
Planning Advisory Committee  
10 a.m.
- Dec. 6th – Transportation Committee  
10 a.m.
- Dec. 7th – Pearl Harbor  
Remembrance Day
- Dec. 11th – RPA-18  
11 a.m.
- Dec. 11th – Nebraska Association of  
County Officials Annual  
Conference
- Dec. 12th – MAPA Board of Directors  
1:30 p.m.  
Council of Officials
- Dec. 21st – Winter Begins
- Dec. 22nd – Hanukkah Begins
- Dec. 24th – Christmas Eve  
MAPA offices close  
at 12:00 p.m.
- Dec. 25th – Christmas Day  
MAPA offices closed
- Dec. 31st – New Years Eve

# MAPA adds new staff and Heartland 2050 intern to agency



## MARGIE BELL

Margie Bell is MAPA's new Human Resources Manager. Margie grew up in Omaha. She has a degree in Business Administration from Bellevue University. Prior to working at MAPA, Margie was the Director of State Personnel for the State of Nebraska. She has four children and seven grandchildren and enjoys gardening, traveling and do-it-yourself projects in her free time.



## SARAH FIXMER

Sarah Fixmer is from Atlantic, Iowa and is the Heartland 2050 intern. She is a junior at the University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO) studying Journalism and Media Communications with a concentration in Public Relations and Advertising and a second field in Business Administration. Sarah is Vice President of Events for the UNO Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA) chapter.



## JODI WOOLERY

Jodi Woolery is MAPA's new Graphics Specialist. She worked most recently at HDR in Omaha and spent 10 years in Kansas City as the Senior Graphic Designer for LionShare Inc., a healthcare marketing agency. Jodi is from Council Bluffs, Iowa and has a degree in Visual Communications and Publications Design from Graceland University. She enjoys spending time with her husband and 3-year-old son.

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