

RPA-18 Policy and Technical Committees

MINUTES



Wednesday, March 8, 2023
Metropolitan Area Planning Agency
2222 Cuming Street, Omaha, NE 68102
402-444-6866

In attendance:

Policy Board Voting Members

- **Richard Crouch** - Mills County
- **Ron Kohn** - Glenwood Mayor
- **John Rasmussen** - Pottawattamie County
- **Gene Gettys** - City of Harlan
- **Charles Parkhurst** - Shelby County

Technical Board Voting Members

- **John Rasmussen** - Pottawattamie County Engineer
- **Brandon Burmeister** - Shelby County Engineer
- **Jamey Clark** - Glenwood
- **Jacob Ferro** - Mills County

Non-Voting/MAPA Staff

- **Travis Halm** - MAPA
- **Lindsey Button** - MAPA
- **Carlos Morales** - MAPA
- ***Scott Suhr** - Iowa DOT District 4
- **Joe George** - City of Malvern

**Attended virtually*

Travis Halm called the meeting to order at 9:00am.

Action Items

A. Approval of the Agenda

Halm called for approval of the agenda.

Crouch motioned to approve the Agenda. Motion was seconded by Gettys. Motion was approved unanimously.

B. Approval of the Minutes from the February 22, 2023 meeting.

There is one correction to be made regarding the date of the approved January meeting minutes. Halm called for approval of the minutes.

Rasmussen motioned to approve the minutes as corrected. Motion was seconded by Kohn. Motion approved unanimously.

C. FY2024 Draft Transportation Planning Work Program (TPWP)

Carlos presented the Draft TPWP. Key work tasks for the coming fiscal year include updating the LRTP, coordinating with local communities on “Block Talks”, Safe Streets for All planning,

Trail Development, and seeking Discretionary funding and matching with local funding opportunities. Total funding increased by 8% over the last year, which constitutes less than one full time employee. MAPA does not have funding to dedicate an entire full time employee to the RPA.

Do we want to look at submitting another planning application for the Iowa cities in RPA-18 that were excluded from the State County planning application.

Technical Committee: Burmeister made a motion to recommend the Policy Board to approve the Draft TPWP and open for public comment. Motion was seconded by Ferro. Motion passed unanimously.

Policy Board: Gettys motioned to approve the technical committee recommendation. Motion was seconded by Rasmussen. Motion approved unanimously.

D. FY2024 Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) Project Selection:

MAPA Received six applications for STBG funding during the FY23 call for projects. Halm presented a brief summary of each application, along with their scores in each criteria, and a draft scenario that included all submitted project programmed into the TIP with some minor modifications to letting year and a reduction in the total funding allocated to the L-34 resurfacing project in order to keep with fiscal constraint. Representatives from many of the applicant jurisdictions were in attendance and spoke to the merits, challenges, and needs of their projects. Projects and discussion are outlined below;

Locust St. Reconstruction and Overlay

- Applicant: City of Glenwood
- Project Location: Locust Street from Hazel Street to Sharp Street
- Description: Asphalt Overlay
- Amount Requested: \$924,739 for letting in FY24
- Discussion:
 - This project was previously approved by RPA-18 for \$771,000 for letting in FY26. This request would increase the total project by \$153,739 and move it up by 2 years.
 - Kohn noted that this project is of particular significance as this is a major collector and the primary route through town and is in very poor condition. This segment of Hwy29 was also heavily impacted by the 2019 floods.

West Nishnabotna River Access

- Applicant: City of Harlan
- Project Location: West Nishnabotna River at Hwy 44
- Description: Would be the second access point on the Nishnabotna River, and would assist in Shelby County's efforts in obtaining a water trail designation for this section of the river.

- Amount Requested: \$273,000 for letting in FY24
 - These funds were previously programmed as a reimbursement for a park and trail project approximately seven years ago. It was then reapplied to a sign and light project, however, the project was never let and has is now being conducted using local funds. Harlan would like to reallocate these previously programmed funds to this new project. The total project cost has not changed.
 - Gettys noted that

F-20L HMA Overlay

- Applicant: Harrison County
- Project Location: Easton Trail from Soldier River Bridge at Pisgah SE 11 miles to Willow Creek Bridge
- Description: HMA Overlay
- Amount Requested: \$1.145M for letting in FY27
- Discussion: no additional discussion

Malvern Safe Routes to School / Wolverine Trail

- Applicant: City of Malvern
- Project Location: from the Wabash Trace to East Mills COmmunity Schools campus
- Project Description: Installation of a 3,400 foot 8-foot wide trail
- Amount Requested: \$250,000 for letting in FY24
- Discussion:
 - This project is part of a larger campaign partially funded by Wellmark Foundation, IA Rural Health, and the Community Foundation
 - George noted that this project was originally identified in a community visioning grant from 2021 as the number one priority in identifying a safe route to schools. The original route identified was down L63 and would have exposed children to higher speed traffic with less of a shoulder. The proposed route would link the community schools to what is currently an agricultural field, but has been approved for development into a subdivision. Part of the subdivision development will include a connection from the end of this proposed trail to the Wabash Trace. This trail will be part of a sensory trail network that encourages kids to get out and move. It enhances cognitive benefits, solves a safety concern, and connects the community schools to the Wabash Trace.

L34 Reconstruction

- Applicant: Pottawattamie County
- Project Location: L34 South of the G30 intersection north approximately 4.5 miles to Potato Creek.
- Project Description: Reconstruction of L34
- Amount Requested: \$3.6M in FY28 (illustrative)

- This project was proposed as an illustrative project for letting in FY28. Rasmussen noted that L34 needs reconstruction in its entirety, as the route was originally overlaid in concrete in 1992.

F-32 Resurfacing

- Applicant: Shelby County
- Project Location: F-32 from Highway 59 to M-47
- Project Description: Highway resurfacing
- Amount Requested: \$1.063M
- Discussion:
 - Burmeister noted that this segment was originally laid in 1998 and is in a state of disrepair. Joints are showing, pavement is full of ruts, and the roadway is starting to fall apart.

As project selection discussion began, Rasmussen requested to see the county equity worksheet, which shows each County and their total funding allocation based on population size over the last several years. Morales requested discussion of the projects based on their merit prior to discussing the worksheet. Rasmussen noted that regional equity is important as projects are becoming quite large, and RPA needs to know how to allocate funds to larger projects. Morales emphasized the importance of allowing smaller communities to apply for and receive these funds as well. The proposed scenario is not currently showing any fiscal constraints, and the currently proposed projects are able to fit within the four year schedule. If there was a project that didn't fit, it may warrant further examination as to which projects should be prioritized. Rasmussen indicated that he is currently under programming based on the funding that should be allocated to Pottawattamie County, and could program additional funds and larger projects, but chooses not to in order to keep regional equity and leave room for other jurisdictions to apply. Ferro noted that Mills County did not apply for anything this year as he did not think there was enough funding to provide for all projects.

Rasmussen emphasized that the Counties are discouraged from programming projects out past the years shown in the TIP as the State requires fiscal constraint, however, in an effort to spend funding, the RPA is unable to build up funding that would be needed to support larger projects.

Burmeister asked if there had been any update on TAP funding from the State, as there are TAP projects currently being applied for under STBG funding. Halm noted that MAPA has not received an update on TAP.

Halm indicated that historically the RPA board has wanted to allocate funding by jurisdiction. In the RPA-18 funding review, it was stated that the RPA does not officially suballocate, and that the State does not allow us to suballocate. Iowa DOT suggested that we have a set aside for communities of a certain amount every year to ensure smaller communities are able to apply for funding. The DOT discourages suballocation amongst the 4 counties as this may prevent smaller communities from applying.

Suhr noted that RPA-14 takes \$50,000 of their STBG funds each year and sets it aside for projects from communities under 5,000 and for transit. Often this money will sit and build without anyone applying for it, but it is still there in case there are any applications submitted, and gives the option for these smaller communities to apply. Regarding suballocation, if we look at the allocation from the first transportation bill until now, regionally, STBG funding distribution is currently pretty even amongst the four counties.

George stated that the City of Malvern realized that STBG is not the ideal funding source for their trail project. TAP would be ideal, but with the school project and housing subdivision coming up in the near future and TAP not being on the table this year per State guidance, STBG was seen as the option. Malvern would be more than happy to step out if there are other needs, and reapply for TAP funding later. Malvern has not applied for safe routes to school (SRTS) funding at this time. Suhr stated that SRTS is now wrapped together with TAP funding.

Rasmussen pointed out that the State doesn't want us to suballocate, but the funding gets to RPA 18 by suballocating by population across the State, and that this practice seems distasteful. Suhr stated that historically counties have paved up to city limits, stopped, and paved out the other side again. Rasmussen noted that this should have been fixed in 2004 and since then the County has constructed projects that go through towns as well. Suhr returned to his example of the \$50,000 set aside used by RPA-14 and indicated that this set aside gives cities like Underwood the opportunity to apply for that funding directly and put towards those projects through cities.

Gettys recognized, in line with Malvern, that their river access project is not the traditional type of project for STBG. The money has been programmed the last 3 or 4 years, so it is unclear how that would impact funding availability moving forward. If it helps in terms of opening up funding for more traditional projects, Harlan can step back and apply for TAP funds at a later time. Gettys also raised general concerns with what's going on at the State level in that it has become increasingly concerning that there are fewer ways for local and smaller jurisdictions to make local funding decisions. At what point does local control and local determination even matter any more? Suhr empathized and encouraged members to continue speaking with their representatives.

Halm noted that it was a directive of this board to develop a spreadsheet to show allocation between the counties based on populations, but that the spreadsheet should be used as a tool, not the decision maker in and of itself. Ultimately the RPA board has to make a decision, as using strict sub allocation may not allow for the flexibility to consider niche projects. Halm checked with Suhr to determine if the region received additional funding from the State specifically for the Harlan project. Suhr confirmed that there was a project that was awarded through the region for trails within Harlan, but the project did not go through the whole approval process, was let without approval, and when they went to seek reimbursement everything triggered. Money was given to Harlan for a project that was done without approvals. This

funding would be reimbursing a project Harlan already did by providing funding for a new project.

Rasmussen asked for the year the proposed Pottawattamie County project would be fully funded based upon available funds. Rasmussen raised concerns about never being able to program projects past the 4 years shown in the TIP. RPA-18 is currently accepting applications within the accomplishment year, which limits funds available for projects proposed for future years. Projects are within 5 years at the county level, and accomplishment year projects are pushing out other larger projects.

Morales proposed programming projects to STBG and moving them to TAP later. This was seen by the board as potentially conflicting as there would be other applications for TAP and moving approved STBG projects to TAP rather than considering all TAP projects in the same application period would be problematic.

Farro raised concern about Mills County potentially going over their suballocation via the increase in the Glenwood project and how that may affect funding availability for projects in other Counties.

Rasmussen's main concern is how to build up funds for larger projects.

Morales proposed exploring AC funding and how that might apply, and that projects may be able to split into NEPA/ Planning and Engineering phases in one year with construction in another year. Suhr confirmed that STBG funds can be used for planning and engineering.

The Board requested the MAPA staff bring up the issue of funding larger projects using STBG funds at the upcoming MPO/RPA quarterly meeting in Ames on March 22nd.

MAPA Staff recommended approval of all received STBG Project Applications.

Technical Committee: Rasmussen motioned to recommend approval of Glenwood's project funding increase of \$151 thousand and letting year adjustment from FY26 to FY24. Motion passed 3 in favor, 1 against.

Policy Board: Gettys motioned to approve the technical committee recommendation. Motion was seconded by Rasmussen. Motion passed unanimously.

There was no vote taken on the other five presented projects.

Discussion Items

E. Additional Business and Public Comment

Passenger Transportation Plan (PTP) public comment period has ended. The only comment received was focused on the Council Bluffs area. Staff received 5 comments from Iowa DOT which were minor and are currently being addressed.

RPA staff will be undertaking an update to the RPA Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) this upcoming fiscal year. This plan is updated every 5 years with a 20 year planning horizon and examines the existing status and future needs of the transportation system. Key areas of interest include safe systems approach, vulnerable road users, equity, and environmental stewardship. MAPA staff will be consulting the County Five Year Plans as a part of this effort.

Brownfields workshop coming up Thursday March 30th. Opportunity to learn and network.

Kohn motioned to adjourn the meeting at 10:40pm. Motion was seconded by Crouch and approved unanimously.

Future Meetings & Events

- **RPA-18 Policy and Technical Committee Meeting: April 12, 2023 - 11:00am**
- **Brownfield Event: Thursday, March 30, 2023 - 9:30 am**
 - Link: <https://www.ksutab.org/events/workshops/details?id=559>