

RPA-18 Policy and Technical Committees

MINUTES



Wednesday, Apr 12, 2023
Metropolitan Area Planning Agency
2222 Cuming Street, Omaha, NE 68102
402-444-6866

In attendance:

Policy Board Voting Members

- **Charles Parkhurst** - Shelby County, Policy Board Chair
- ***Gene Gettys Jr.** - City of Harlan
- **Ron Kohn** - Glenwood
- **Susan Miller** - Pottawattamie County

Technical Board Voting Members

- **John Rasmussen** - Pottawattamie County, Technical Committee Chair
- **Brandon Burmeister** - Shelby County
- **Jacob Ferro** - Mills County
- ***Gene Gettys Jr.** - City of Harlan

Non-Voting/MAPA Staff

- ***Travis Halm** - MAPA
- **Lindsey Button** - MAPA
- **Scott Suhr** - Iowa DOT

**Attended virtually*

Halm called the meeting to order at 11:03am.

Action Items

A. Approval of the Agenda

Parkhurst called for approval of the agenda.

Kohn motioned to approve the Agenda. Motion was seconded by Ferro. Motion passed unanimously.

B. Approval of the Minutes from the March 3,, 2023 meeting.

Corrections were proposed to the minutes to include information on the proposed City of Harlan project, and to include the letting year for the proposed project from Shebly County. Parkhurst called for approval of the minutes.

Burmeister motioned to approve the minutes as corrected. Motion was seconded by Gettys. Motion passed unanimously.

C. FY2024-29 RPA-13/18 Passenger Transportation Plan (PTP)

Halm presented the Final PTP for RPA-13 and RPA-18. Since the Draft plan was approved by RPA-18, one public comment was received, but pertained more to SWITA service within the

Council Bluffs area, which is outside the scope of this plan. Staff directed the commenter towards the Coordinated Transit Committee which has jurisdiction over this area. Iowa DOT requested the addition of SWITA budget projections, and an update to the Limited English Proficiency Chart, both of which have been addressed by staff in the final plan. Staff reviewed key strategies from the plan and recommended approval of the final PTP.

Technical Committee: Rasmussen made a motion to recommend the Policy Board to approve the final draft of the Passenger Transportation Plan for submission to Iowa DOT. Motion was seconded by Burmeister. Motion passed unanimously.

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

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

Halm reviewed discussion and motions made at the March RPA-18 Policy and Technical Committee meeting. A total of six projects were submitted to the program, and the Amendment to the City of Glenwood's Locust Street asphalt overlay project was approved for inclusion in the TIP. This project is STBG-SWAP eligible, and the amendment called for increasing the funding amount by \$151,000, and moving the project up to FY24 from FY26. No other projects received a motion. Halm opened the floor for further discussion on inclusion of any of the remaining five applications to be considered for the FY24 TIP, and on the process to use in the future to address smaller community inclusion in the project selection process.

Button shared a table of all submitted projects for review.

Rasmussen noted that the board needs to work on the process for bringing projects. If we always do a call for applications and we allow for projects to be programmed in the accomplishment year, then this limits the Board's ability to fund larger more expensive projects in the future. Rasmussen doesn't believe there is a lack of representation for small towns and noted that all County Engineers work with the small towns in their Counties. Rasmussen wants to know how to go about funding a large project using RPA-18 STBG funds.

Halm stated that the solution will have to come from this Board. There will either need to be some understanding that there is a large illustrative project that will need funding, or there will need to be a policy in place. The only policy that Iowa DOT has identified is a potential set-aside for small community projects. Whatever the solution, the Board needs to make sure to leave opportunities for smaller communities, and make especially sure there is opportunity for the larger cities like Glenwood and Harlan, which have passed the 100,000 population mark.

Rasmussen doesn't see how smaller communities that do not have a federal aid route would be able to make use of federal funding.

Halm noted that this is not something that the Board needs to make a decision on today, but is something that can be discussed and developed in future meetings. The Board does need to make a decision today regarding any additional projects they would want to include in the FY24 TIP. Halm noted particular concern from Harlan regarding their proposed Nishnabotna River Access project, as this project would be making use of backfill funds that were meant to be earmarked for Harlan.

Getty's stated that Harlan is not looking to hold up the process or create future precedents, as this is a special case situation. If there is concern because this is more of a TAP type of project, Getty's wants to make sure it is noted that if TAP doesn't open up in the next year, they will be back and looking for approval next year. Harlan is not ready to get started this Fall, but after this year they will be looking to spend these funds.

Halm noted that this is a unique situation as it was added to RPA-18's allocation with intention to administer for Harlan. Harlan has never received an STBG project, and it is important to set a precedent that both Harlan and Glenwood are eligible for projects, as County Engineers are unable to sponsor projects through these communities as they are over the population threshold.

Rasmussen expressed concern as to the source of this funding and understood this funding as a fix for a project that did not meet the requirements of federal funding. This is his concern with all small towns as they may not understand the additional funding and administrative requirements that are needed for federal funding.

Suhr shared examples from Region 14 where they made the decision 4-5 years ago to set \$50,000 aside each year for small community and transit projects. There are some years where that money doesn't get spent, and in those cases it can roll over and be made available the following year. Bedford is taking advantage of this for sidewalk repairs, curb and gutters, and parking areas, and other communities have also taken advantage. Southern Iowa Trolley used this set aside to purchase buses. Not every community is going to apply, but it creates a spot for them to apply if they want to. The communities will not be able to use the funds for a local street though, as it would have to be a collector to use STBG funds.

Suhr explained that in the case of the Harlan project, Harlan was awarded the funds, but ended up paying for their project out of pocket with local funds. This \$273,000 is backfill for those local funds.

Rasmussen expressed that he didn't realize they had originally paid for their first project using local funds, and now feels much better about funding the Harlan project given the situation. Rasmussen then asked how to build up a balance for a larger project.

Suhr noted that he and Halm had discussed this with Zach. If you want to program a large project, it may be worth programming it as partially funded in the last year of the TIP (FY28) to

get it in the TIP, and then when funds become available in FY29 the project can move to FY29 and be fully funded.

Rasmussen is still concerned that when we do a call for projects each year, smaller projects are able to slip in ahead of the larger projects.

Button asked for clarification on whether we want to be spending STBG funds on such large projects when there is limited funding available.

Rasmussen and Suhr noted that these large projects are what STBG and federal aid is for, as smaller projects can lead to additional administrative issues. Suhr raised the issue of not wanting to sub-allocate among the Counties, but that when it comes time to call for projects, we have to look beyond what each County has for the next five years.

Halm suggested that the LRTP, which forecasts out to 2025, could have a 20 year projection within that process that may provide a means to forecast a bit better for these larger projects.

Suhr noted that each member has their needs, and if we continue doing 1 and 2 million projects, then the larger significant projects will never get done. For example, if Pottawattamie county has such a large project at a time when other Counties do not, then it is worth letting that project through to reduce future costs associated with inflation and other issues. Don't look at it so much as "whose turn it is", and rather which projects are most regionally significant.

Burmeister noted that the Board can appreciate that, but others are concerned that accepting projects for the allocation year takes funds away from larger projects down the road. When he first put forth a project for letting in an illustrative year he was almost run out of the room. There is room for everyone to apply, he would just like to see it still be available for the future.

Suhr stated that the State's reason we go through the application process is because we need to have an open discussion. If someone comes in and asks how a project was selected, we need to be able to provide reasons to substantiate, including project scoring and discussion among the counties.

Rasmussen noted that there is a challenge to equity in that model. Pottawattamie County would be able to bring significant projects to the table, which may reduce opportunities for others. He wants to make sure there is a check for everyone to stay in their lane. Rasmussen noted that Pottawattamie County, due to it's population, is bringing in most of the funding. If we change to a scoring criteria it may change things for everyone in this room.

Rasmussen then asked if the TIP is fiscally constrained if we include all of these projects.

Halm presented a TIP scenario that was fiscally constrained with all projects funded. There was further discussion to rearrange the letting years for two projects in Mills County, and to

reprogram the Pottawattamie County G30 resurfacing project, currently programed for letting in FY25, out to FY27. These adjustments enable the Harlan project to be funded in FY25.

Technical Committee: Rasmussen made a motion to recommend the Policy Board to;

- Reprogram Mills County L-63 HMA overlay project, in the amount of \$1.25M from FY24 to FY25;
- Reprogram Mills County L-31 HMW overlay project, in the amount of \$320,000, from FY25 to FY24;
- Reprogram Pottawattamie County G-30 resurfacing project, in the amount of \$925,000, from FY25 to FY27
- Approve the City of Harlan West Nishnabotna River Access project, in the amount of \$273,000, for letting in FY25
- Deny the City of Malvern Wolverine Trail project, as it was rescinded by the applicant in March
- Approve the Harrison County F-20 HMA Overlay project, in the amount of \$1.145M for letting in FY27
- Approve the Pottawattamie County L-34 reconstruction project, at partial funding in the amount of \$2.27M, for illustrative letting in FY28
- Approve the Shelby County F-32 resurfacing project, in the amount of \$1.064M, for letting in FY27

Motion was seconded by Ferro. Motion passed unanimously.

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

Discussion Items

E. Additional Business and Public Comment

Suhr noted that Iowa DOT will be readjusting the urban area boundaries in the coming year, and will be looking to meet with the cities, county engineers, and MAPA staff to review proposed map updates. Suhr requested assistance from MAPA staff in coordination of those meetings.

Rasmussen motioned to adjourn the meeting at 11:51am. Motion was seconded by Burmeister and approved unanimously.

Future Meetings & Events

- RPA-18 Policy and Technical Committee Meeting: May 24, 2023 - 11:00am