

RPA-18 Policy and Technical Committees

MINUTES



Wednesday, July 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
- **Ron Kohn** - Glenwood
- **Susan Miller** - Pottawattamie County
- **Steve Struble** - Harrison County

Technical Board Voting Members

- **Brandon Burmeister** - Shelby County
- **Jacob Ferro** - Mills County
- **Steve Struble** - Harrison County

Non-Voting/MAPA Staff

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

**Attended virtually*

Charles Parkhurst called the meeting to order at 11:02am.

Action Items

1. **Approval of the Agenda**

Parkhurst called for approval of the agenda.

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

2. **Approval of the Minutes from the April 12, 2023 meeting.**

No changes to be made to the minutes. Parkhurst

Ferro motioned to approve the minutes. Motion was seconded by Struble. Motion passed.

3. **FY2024 Transportation Improvement Program**

Halm presented the Final Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) to the committee for approval. The TIP contains \$1,244,739 of STBG Programmed in FY2024, and \$385,000 of TAP Programmed in the FY2024. Iowa DOT asked for more clarification on how bridges are selected in the counties, and this information was provided by County Engineers. The major difference in the project list is that Missouri Valley received a \$1M City Bridge award, and because this project is within our 4 year constraint it was added to the TIP. The Final TIP is due to Iowa DOT July 15th.

There were no comments on the Final TIP.

Technical Committee: Struble made a motion to recommend the Policy Board to approve the FY2024 Transportation Improvement Program. Motion was seconded by Ferro. Motion passed.

Susan asked if Pottawattamie county had a proxy vote and if she could vote on John's behalf. Halm noted that to his knowledge, proxy votes only work in the direction of the Technical committee voting on behalf of the Policy Committee, not the other way around.

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

4. Iowa Department of Transportation Planning (PL) Funding Allocation

Halm led a discussion on the Iowa Department of Transportation process for allocating Planning (PL) funding to RPA and MPO organizations. MAPA has a quarterly meeting with Iowa DOT and the MPO/RPAs. As part of the decennial census Iowa DOT reviews the funding allocation for PL funding. The Iowa DOT sent to the RPAs what their opinion was on the current distribution of planning funds. On the current proposal, 17 of 18 RPAs confirmed they were ok with the current funding structure. RPA 1 in NE Iowa presented two PL funding scenarios. The current scenario is funding allocation on a per county basis for the final quarter of funding. The proposed scenario is based per land area for that final quarter of funding.

Under the current scenario, RPA18 has an estimated \$54,812 of PL funds. Under the proposed scenario, RPA18 would be allocated an estimated \$56,458. A net gain of \$1,646. Halm presented a list of all RPAs and noted which RPAs would gain funds, and which would lose funds, and how much, based on the proposed scenario.

Iowa DOT wants RPA18 to provide a letter or email to them stating which scenario we would prefer. Morale noted that overall these changes in total funding amounts are relatively small. In the current funding structure, you tend to see a decrease for 4 RPAs, and all numbers are under \$1,000. In the new proposal, there are 7 RPAs the end up losing funds that amount to thousands of dollars. On one side, under the current structure, RPA18 would gain additional funding, however it is also a discussion of what is most fair throughout the State.

Struble would not be in favor of any change without looking at the number of road miles per county and taking a closer look at a lot of other criteria that this could be based on other than just land area, which doesn't necessarily relate to the number of miles or population that is running on those roads. Halm noted that $\frac{1}{4}$ of the funding formula accounts for population. There was an extensive discussion at the MPO meeting regarding lane miles, and was one key reason the discussion was brought back to the RPA committees. Struble noted it makes more sense to put more into population than into area. It would be great to get more money, but he would hate to see counties lose that should be weighed heavier on population.

Ferro noted that the dollar amount is not significant and the change doesn't really make any difference when we are talking about such small dollar amounts. Halm noted this was also discussed at the quarterly meeting. Ferro and Struble were in favor of keeping the funding scenario the same.

Technical Committee: Ferro made a motion to recommend the Policy Board to approve keeping the Funding Scenario consistent with the current methods. Motion was seconded by Struble. Motion passed.

There was no other discussion from the policy board based on the discussion and motion from the technical committee.

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

MAPA will send an email to Iowa DOT on behalf of RPA-18 noting their decision on the funding scenarios.

Discussion Items

5. Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A)

Halm led discussion on the Safe Streets for All Application for RPA 13 & RPA 18 for the communities of. On Friday of last week, MAPA submitted an application for Safe Streets and Roads for All jointly with SWIPCO / RPA-13. The proposed application would cover seven communities >2,500 population. This planning effort would include 7 communities; Atlantic, Clarinda, Glenwood, Harlan, Missouri Valley, Red Oak and Shenandoah. If awarded, MAPA would plan to select a consulting firm in 2024, develop a draft action in 2024/25 and the goal would be to have an implementation grant applied for based on the findings of the plan by 2026.

Boerner presented the MPO application that was successful last year. This application included MAPA's TMA, but excluded the rural portions of Pottawattamie County. This plan would include Carter Lake, Crescent, and McClelland to identify projects on local roads that could be funded in future cycles of the SS4A program. The schedule for this MPO grant is currently being coordinated through the Nebraska DOT as they provide that oversight for the MPO. This new application will be working through the Iowa FHWA office. We hope to have an action plan on the MPO project developed in April of 2024, which gives us an opportunity to learn what it takes to be competitive for implementation funds in the future so that we can apply that to the RPA plan in the future.

There were no questions or discussion points from the policy or technical board on SS4A.

6. Public Participation Plan (PPP)

Halm led a discussion on the MAPA Public Participation Plan (PPP) Update. As an MPO and an RPA, MAPA undergoes a public participation plan update every 5 years. It outlines how MAPA (including RPA-18) reaches out to the Public for participation in all planning activities. In particular, it guides the

TIP, TPWP, LRTP, and PTP. The last plan was updated in 2019, and we always go through the PPP about a year in advance of LRTP planning efforts, being the largest planning effort undertaken by the MPO/RPA. Updates to the plan include efforts made to simplify and clarify the document, added an executive summary for quick reference for staff and public, added language about virtual engagement and a 5% threshold for language translation (if 5% or more within a project area speak a language other than English).

The Draft PPP is currently available online at www.mapacog.org/projects/public-participation-plan. Because we are asking for public participation in our PPP this effort is more robust, and comments will be open for 45 days, which is longer than the standard 30 day comment period.

Susan asked if the survey is available to the general public, or just those on this conference call. Halm noted it is open to the public, and anyone who is a member of our communities and served by our work is encouraged to provide public comment if they believe things are missing from the plan etc.

Halm noted there will need to be a virtual meeting in August or September to approve the PPP when it follows public comment and when the Final is completed. More information will be provided as it becomes available.

Struble asked the definition of a major vs. minor amendment for approval under the TIP and LRTP. Halm noted that a major amendment would be adding strategies, or adding projects. Minor would be verbiage changes. There are also administrative modifications that are even lower than a minor change, for example, if funding within the TIP is within a certain amount, it can be administratively modified. Major includes projects above a certain dollar value, or completely new strategies, being added to the TIP or LRTP.

7. PROTECT Grant Opportunity

Halm led discussion on the PROTECT grant opportunity. PROTECT stands for Promoting Resilient Operations... Resiliency, and disaster response. This was a part of the infrastructure bill passed in 2021. This opportunity aims to make surface transportation more resilient to natural hazards, including climate change, flooding, extreme weather and other disasters. There is an estimated \$1.5Billion available nationally each year through 2026. There are two awards, planning, and competitive resilience improvement grants. We would hope to start with a planning grant, and use plan so apply for improvement grants. Applications are due August 18th, so there is a quick turn around for this if we plan to apply. Eligible entities include... Eligible activities include; planning, construction, operations and maintenance, technology demonstrations and deployment, climate and sustainability, accessibility, security. Note that funding is available to multiple transportation methods including bike/ped, maritime, roadway, transit.

Halm wants to discuss some potential ideas within the RPA region for potential projects. Some suggestions include safety treatments on county roads which became I-29 detours during the Missouri River flood(s), along with broader ideas including transportation incident management (TIM)

enhancements and considering how we roll out. This can be as small as the MAPA region, or can be as broad as the entire watershed.

Boerner noted that the grant application gives credit for planning that has already been done. For example, in Nebraska the PMRNRD has done a hazard mitigation plan which comes up with a laundry list of potential projects. On the Iowa side, there is a state wide risk mitigation plan through FEMA, which would be used, and each individual county has their own plan. If there is coordination that can be done, MAPA would be happy to take those lists and coordinate. One challenge of the 5 year plan is that it may not always be updated, so we want to make sure we understand which projects have already been completed. This is early in development, we know we want to pursue organizationally, but this is outside of our regular line of work so we are seeking input and thoughts from the group.

Struble said he is certainly interested in the I-29 emergency detour upgrade possibility. We could certainly benefit from upgrades on that section that didn't perform very well last time. That must be what John talked to Travis about. If there is anything that can be done on that to get us in line for eligibility there that would be great. Halm noted there were ppl in Crescent trying to get North, L-20, and having challenges. Ferro asked if there was a minimum award for this grant. Boerner stated there is a minimum. Planning is a \$100,000 minimum and there is no match requirement for planning activities. There are also opportunities to reduce the federal match, and Iowa DOT is developing a resilience improvement plan (RIP) through this PROTECT which is discretionary funding that can be applied for as well as State funds, (listen to the meeting - missed this part)

Morales noted that at the State level they look at PROTECT funding by focusing on state owned infrastructure, which doesn't necessarily coincide with local jurisdictions and local problems. They are planning on using these dollars to plan evacuation routes and emergency response in case of a natural disaster for state owned infrastructure. This is a high level. Intent for the MAPA region is to hone in on specific transportation issues ensuring we have redundancies, and that we can put in place information to push out to the general public on where there are closures and how quickly we can distribute information to the general public through a phone system, sign messages, or having enough barricades to do the job. From our understanding and initial conversations, the state is looking at state owned infrastructure and not necessarily secondary or tertiary roads and local impacts.

Struble inquired if we could possibly do some kind of planning grant, that \$100,000 would be very helpful to try and improve the I-29 detours. At the same time, those same routes are subject to heavier loads that are not allowed on the interstate, and some of the infrastructure on the detours need a lot of help whenever there is a need for detours onto the county roads. Halm noted John said last week that there are some roads they could have gotten 3 more years out of, but they deteriorated faster because of the detours. Struble confirmed that the same is true in his region. Halm will look into possibilities to use PROTECT funds to enhance facilities that improve resiliency by proxy.

Ferro noted that the main street going through Glenwood was affected by the floods and needs to be redone, but was recently approved for funding. Not a lot in Mills County as it has already been redone.

8. Rural and Tribal Assistance Pilot Program

Halm presented on the Rural and Tribal Assistance Pilot Program for engineering dollars available to eligible jurisdictions in rural and tribal areas nationwide.

Morales noted that most recently Pottawattamie was a part of a 9 bridge raise project (BIP). 9 counties applied for RAISE funding in Iowa and were awarded. A lot of the work beforehand was paid for with local funds. Pott county paid for a lot of the pre-engineering work that was then used to apply for the large project. This program provides funding that is needed to do that preliminary work. It is first come first served, which is an interesting aspect, and it is a good opportunity to advance some specific projects within the RPA region.

Halm noted there are some communities in particular that have some trail plans, and that this would be a neat opportunity to move some of those trail projects forward. Struble asked if we have a general idea of what projects would be eligible for those grant funding projects? Typically these grant programs are fairly large projects. Struble, the winners on those grants are generally gigantic populated areas. Going together to get some of those larger grants as the state has been doing recently. Morales stated that Mega and INFRA are really big projects, we will send out the fact sheets on those from our website and links to other resources. \$25M and above kinds of projects. TO be competitive you have to have a strong application and have moved through preliminary design and NEPA consideration in order to have them built within the funding timeline. This opportunity allows a significant chunk of that planning effort that bogs a lot of people down or takes a significant amount of time. RAISE is something we have seen with no minimum award amount like main street corridors, signal and intersection improvements etc. We are seeing a lot of discretionary grants coming in and the locations that are best positioned to construct and build and check a lot of application boxes are the locations that tend to get the most awards.

Button noted this program is trying to even the playing field. Boerner reiterated that there is no local match requirements.

Struble asked about the tribal set aside. \$1.6M of the total funding is set aside for tribes.

9. Additional Business and Public Comment

MAPA shared upcoming events

- Heartland 2050 Summit in August (details to come) the topic will be resilience which is particularly relevant with the PROTECT grant and recent flood events
- RPA meeting will be needed in August or September for PPP approval
- RPA 13/18 Transportation Advisory Group is set for Sept 28 - this is led by SWITA and will be hosted on Hamburg
- The MAPA Council of Officials meeting is coming up October 4th.

Kohn motioned to adjourn the meeting at 12:07. Motion was seconded by Parkhurst and approved unanimously.