

# What's Happening

*For Community Leaders*

January/February 2019

## TravelSmart program eases UNMC/NM parking crunch

The University of Nebraska Medical Center and Nebraska Medicine (UNMC/NM) are transforming the way people get to work and school in Midtown Omaha by offering a perk that's hard to beat, TravelSmart. As the name implies, it's a smart way to travel in an area of town that can often be congested and under construction.



**University of Nebraska  
Medical Center™**  
**Nebraska Medicine**

UNMC/NM created TravelSmart in June 2015. It's a partnership between Metro Transit, Heartland B-cycle, the City of Omaha and surrounding businesses designed to promote walking, cycling, carpooling and public transit.

"We started it for a variety of reasons. It's a stated goal in our Sustainability Master Plan. We were also adding three new buildings on campus and there was a fear we wouldn't have enough available parking," said Melanie Stewart, Sustainability Manager for the University of Nebraska Medical Center and Nebraska Medicine.

So UNMC/NM implemented TravelSmart, a robust Transportation Demand Management (TDM) program. "There's no need to acquire more land, build parking and spend millions of dollars. Now with TravelSmart, employees get free perks, have healthier options and reduced stress. Plus patients and visitors encounter less traffic coming to and on campus. That's a lot of win-wins," said Stewart.

The program, which is free for anyone at UNMC/NM and Clarkson College, has grown rapidly. During the past three years, the percentage of commuters not driving alone increased from 12% to 22%, representing savings of 29,000 single occupant miles traveled per week.

When TravelSmart first started, UNMC/NM's goal was a 20% participation rate. "We were averaging more than one person each day signing up, which is fantastic for a TDM

program. So our new goal is 35% by 2030," said Stewart.

The program also provides free bus passes and free parking for carpoolers. The website makes participating easy. There are cost-calculators, helpful links to city bike maps and videos, including one that shows how to put a bike on the bus.

TravelSmart is now part of the culture at UNMC/NM. It's part of new employee and student orientation. "Plus we highlight support programs, such as an emergency ride home. All of this makes the program flexible for a variety of different jobs, schedules, and personal needs," said Stewart.

And it's had a dramatic impact in just a few years. "We're avoiding 600 to 700 cars coming to campus each day, which is a large parking garage worth. So we're saving money on construction of additional parking, utilities, and maintenance. We're also reducing emissions which means better air to breathe. That's good for health and better health is the core of our mission. So I consider TravelSmart to be preventative healthcare," said Stewart.

MAPA awarded a 2018 Regional Service Award to the University of Nebraska Medical Center and Nebraska Medicine for their work to create sustainable solutions to transportation challenges.



L to R: La Vista Mayor Doug Kindig, MAPA Executive Director Greg Youell, UNMC/NM Sustainability Manager Melanie Stewart, and former Bellevue Mayor Rita Sanders pose at the MAPA Annual Meeting.

# Blair workforce housing taking shape on former campus

Transformation Hill, part of the former Dana College Campus in Blair, is taking shape. In the past few months, builders poured the foundations for five new speculative homes to assist the City with filling a growing need for workforce housing.

MAPA and the City of Blair are working together on the project. In May 2018, the Nebraska Department of Economic Development (DED) awarded the MAPA Foundation and the City of Blair a \$351,000 grant from the Nebraska Rural Workforce Housing Fund to assist with the program. The Nebraska Investment Finance Authority (NIFA) also awarded a \$250,000 grant.

MAPA will administer a revolving loan fund of \$977,000 to build the new housing. Blair Citizens Housing Task Force asked the city council to find ways to resolve the need for housing, help grow its workforce, retain existing employees and attract young talent.

Through this redevelopment plan, Blair hopes to build approximately 30 workforce housing units each with an approximate market value of \$200,000. The first phase should be completed by June 2019.

MAPA planners are available to assist cities and counties with community and economic

development needs. Contact Don Gross, MAPA Community and Economic Development Manager at [dgross@mapacog.org](mailto:dgross@mapacog.org) or 402-444-6866, ext. 230.



Land is cleared in August 2018 after the demolition of residence halls on the former Dana College campus in Blair for future workforce housing.



As of January 2019, progress can be seen on the construction of foundations for speculative homes on the former Dana College campus.

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## Feb. 25 open house to explain Bellevue Toll Bridge options

Shifting traffic patterns have created uncertainty for the Bellevue Toll Bridge, which was once a vital link between Nebraska and Iowa south of the Omaha-Council Bluffs metro.

The Bellevue Bridge Commission and MAPA are studying the best options for the 69-year-old bridge and have narrowed it to three possibilities:

**Option 1:** *Tear it down. Estimated cost: \$8.5 million.*

**Option 2:** *Build a new bridge with a dedicated lane for cyclists and pedestrians. Estimated cost: \$62 million.*

**Option 3:** *Convert the bridge to a recreational trail. Estimated cost: \$6.7 million.*

MAPA and the Bellevue Bridge Commission are looking for feedback on these three options. An open house is set for Monday, February 25 from 4:00

p.m. to 7:00 p.m. at the Bellevue City Hall Council Chambers, 1500 Wall Street, Bellevue.



# Omaha bike directional sign expansion

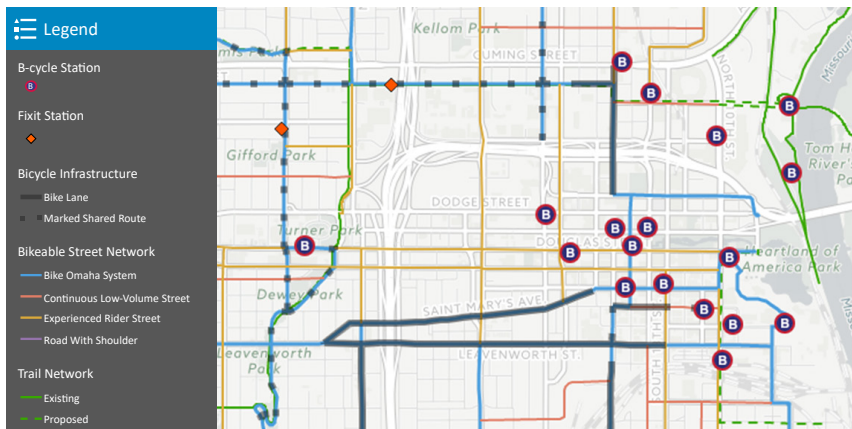


Expect to see more of these signs around town. They're part of the City of Omaha's effort to help bicyclists navigate the City. The signs will be installed along Bike Omaha

Network routes in Downtown, Midtown, South Omaha, Benson, and Aksarben.

The first phase includes 692 panels in 400 locations. Live Well contacted local philanthropists to raise money for the signs and donated them to the city.

In addition to the bicycle wayfinding signs, MAPA created a digital map that shows the best bike routes throughout the region. Go to <http://bikemap.mapacog.org>.



# Population forecasts show regional growth

New population forecasts from MAPA show that by 2050, the five-county region MAPA serves will grow to 1,197,955 people, a 48.9% increase from 2010 population figures.

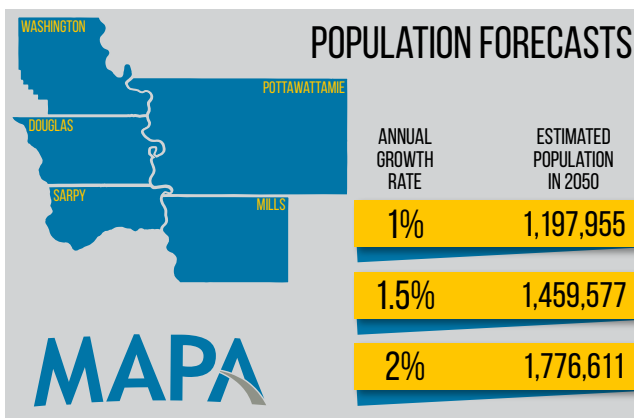
The five-county region includes Washington, Douglas and Sarpy Counties in Nebraska; Pottawattamie and Mills Counties in Iowa.

The forecast projects Sarpy County will lead population growth with a 100% change from its population of 158,840 in 2010 to 317,618 residents in 2050.

The population of the

Omaha-Council Bluffs Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) is anticipated to hit one million people by 2025.

This forecast raises interesting questions regarding the impact of population changes on workforce development and transportation needs among other issues.



# CALENDAR

## March 2019

- Mar. 2nd – NACo National Association of Counties Legislative Conference - Washington D.C.
- Mar. 6th – Ash Wednesday
- Mar. 10th – Daylight Saving Time begins Set clocks ahead one hour
- Mar. 13th – RPA-18 11 a.m. Council of Officials
- Mar. 17th – St. Patrick's Day
- Mar. 18th – NADO Washington Policy Conference - Arlington, VA
- Mar. 20th – Finance Committee 8:30 a.m. Coordinated Transit 10:30 a.m.
- Mar. 22nd – Transportation 10 a.m.
- Mar. 28th – MAPA Board of Directors 1:30 p.m.

## April 2019

- Apr. 5th – Heartland 2050 Regional Planning Advisory Committee 10 a.m.
- Apr. 10th – RPA-18 11 a.m.
- Apr. 17th – Finance Committee 8:30 a.m. Coordinated Transit 10:30 a.m.
- Apr. 19th – Transportation 10 a.m. Good Friday
- Apr. 21st – Easter
- Apr. 22nd – Earth Day
- Apr. 25th – MAPA Board of Directors 1:30 p.m.

# MAPA adds new staff members in late 2018 and early 2019

MAPA welcomed two staff members to the agency in Fall 2018 and Winter 2019.

Trevor Harlow serves as an intern for Heartland 2050.

Originally from Waterloo, Neb., Trevor is now a senior at the University of Nebraska Omaha. He will graduate in May 2019 with a degree in Political Science and Environmental Studies.

After graduating, Trevor plans to attend graduate school to obtain a Master's degree in Public Administration.

Kelly Shoff is the agency's new Communications Assistant. Kelly joined the MAPA team on Jan. 2 after 13 years as the Executive Producer at KETV, the ABC-affiliate in Omaha.

Kelly worked at several TV stations throughout her broadcasting career after earning a Bachelor's degree in Broadcast News from Drake University in Des Moines.

Kelly and her husband have two sons and live in Council Bluffs, Iowa. They are avid cyclists and have ridden RAGBRAI 4 times.



**TREVOR HARLOW**  
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