

What's Happening

For Community Leaders

November/December 2019

Job access fueled senator's legislative bill to set up RMTA

When it comes to building a vibrant metro area and improving access to employment and education, Nebraska State Senator Justin Wayne of Legislative District 13 in Omaha points to public transit as a key factor.

"Transportation, particularly access to a robust regional transit system, is absolutely critical to the continued economic growth of the Omaha metropolitan area," said Wayne. "Expanding our transit system will provide access to employment and educational opportunities for low-income residents who can't afford a car, help us remain competitive with other metropolitan areas in the Midwest in recruiting and retaining young talent, and enhance prospects for continued growth in Omaha's urban core."

Senator Wayne sponsored and prioritized LB 492, the Regional Metropolitan Transit Authority Act (RMTA), during the last legislative session and led a successful veto override to pass the bill. This legislation allows Metro Transit to expand to a regional entity beyond its geographical limits within the City of Omaha. Currently, cities in Omaha's suburbs must contract services with Metro.

As noted in the 2013 Regional Transit Vision study MAPA and Metro coordinated together, previous statutes made it difficult, if not impossible for Metro to expand to a regional transit authority. Under the new law, other communities, through their city councils, could vote by two-thirds majority to opt-in to the regional transit authority (RMTA). Under the act, the RMTA would have an elected board. If Metro would vote to become an RMTA, it would also have taxing authority so it would no longer need to request funds from the City of Omaha and Douglas County as it does currently.

Wayne's sponsorship of LB 492 developed from the desire to improve access to employment for the people of his district, not only because he represents North Omaha, but he also grew up there.

"Although the Omaha metropolitan area generally enjoys a strong economy, we have a significant gap in our ability to move workers where the jobs are. People who live in



Sen. Justin Wayne received MAPA's 2019 Regional Citizenship Award for sponsoring LB 492. Pictured L-R: Douglas County Commissioner Clare Duda, MAPA Council of Officials President; Justin Wayne, Greg Youell, MAPA Executive Director and La Vista Mayor Doug Kindig, MAPA Board of Directors Chair.

North Omaha often lack access to transportation that would enable them to get to good-paying jobs, as many employers such as PayPal and Facebook are located in Sarpy County," said Wayne.

Searching for ways to boost employment access led him to take a closer look at the Omaha metropolitan area's mass transit system.

"It became clear that improving our transit system could not occur without addressing the structural flaws in our transit authority statutes. LB 492 was designed to correct those flaws, and represents a critical first step toward improving our transit system in Omaha and expanding transit into surrounding communities down the road," said Wayne.

For his work which brought the Regional Metropolitan Transit Authority Act into law, Senator Wayne received MAPA's 2019 Regional Citizenship Award.

Iowa DNR awards Glenwood REAP grant for trail project



Glenwood a \$100,000 grant to help support the project.

REAP invests in projects that enhance and protect the Iowa's natural and cultural resources. Fifteen percent of

Glenwood's trail system project receives a financial boost from the Iowa Department of Natural Resources through its Resource Enhancement and Protection fund known as REAP. REAP awarded

REAP is set aside for grants to cities and 20 percent is set aside for county conservation boards for projects that help establish natural areas, encourage outdoor recreation and resource management.

The grant money will assist with the overall construction cost of the project which includes building three miles of paved trails through Glenwood that would be used as a pedestrian and cycling trail. Four bridges will be constructed as a result of the trail system.

The long-term goal is to build out the trails to connect them eventually to the Wabash Trace Nature Trail which runs through southwest Iowa.

Jeff Spiehs named one of MBJ's 2019 40 Under 40 Award winners

MAPA Community Relations Manager Jeff Spiehs is one of the recipients of the Midlands Business Journal's 40 Under 40 Award this year. Jeff is a lead architect of the Heartland 2050 Regional Vision and has led public engagement efforts including immersive, experiential community events to raise awareness of land use.

He also fills many extracurricular leadership roles. Jeff is an advisory board member for inCOMMON Community Development and is a past president of the South Omaha Neighborhood Alliance (SONA). He also served as chairman for ONE Omaha, the United Way Community Investment Review Team and the Public Policy and Engagement Committee of the Greater Omaha Young Professionals Council. He was a member of Leadership Omaha Class 39. Congratulations on this much-deserved recognition and thank you for all the work you do on behalf of MAPA!



Pictured L-R: Karna Loewenstein, MAPA Communications & Outreach Manager; Jeff Spiehs and Greg Youell, MAPA Executive Director.

Missing Middle Housing focus of Expanding Housing Choices Forum

MAPA teamed up with AARP Nebraska, AARP Iowa and the University of Nebraska Omaha's (UNO) Center for Public Affairs Research to host the Expanding Housing Choices forum on Nov. 14. Orange Splot LLC founder Eli Spevak served as keynote speaker and moderator for panel presentations and discussions which focused on the changing demographics of U.S. households and how to remove obstacles to create a much-needed type of housing known as missing middle housing. Orange Splot LLC is a housing development company with a mission to pioneer new models of community-oriented, affordable and green housing in Portland, Oregon.



Eli Spevak speaks on the need for housing which creates walkable communities and meets the changing demographics of U.S. households.



Alexis Bromley of ONE Omaha and Asit Goswami of Gifford Park Neighborhood Association present on "Neighborhood Development: Establishing Community Dialogue".



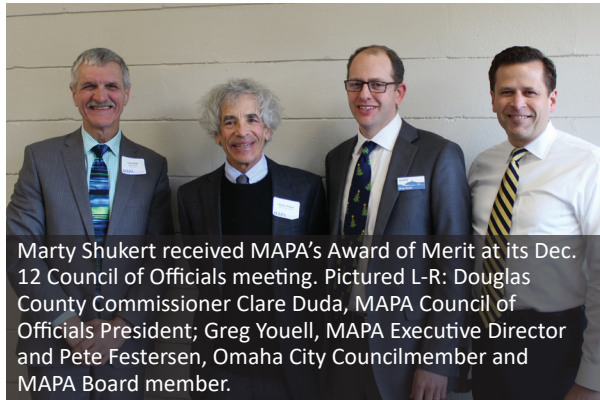
Audience members engage with speakers at the Expanding Housing Choices forum.

Shukert presented with Award of Merit

MAPA presented Marty Shukert with the agency's Award of Merit at its Council of Officials meeting Dec. 12. The Award of Merit is MAPA's highest award for service.

Through his work with RDG Planning and Design and the City of Omaha as a former Planning Director, Shukert was involved in a number of major downtown and neighborhood development projects, including Omaha's riverfront redevelopment and downtown housing programs.

Shukert is recognized as a vigorous advocate for urban design and bicycle/pedestrian interests in Omaha and the Midwest region.



Marty Shukert received MAPA's Award of Merit at its Dec. 12 Council of Officials meeting. Pictured L-R: Douglas County Commissioner Clare Duda, MAPA Council of Officials President; Greg Youell, MAPA Executive Director and Pete Festersen, Omaha City Councilmember and MAPA Board member.

MAPA issues FY2021 Call for Projects

MAPA is calling for projects from its Transportation Management Area (TMA) for a variety of regional funding programs from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA). Project applications for the FY2021 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) funding cycle should be submitted no later than **4:30 p.m. on Friday, January 10, 2020.**

The programs available include: the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP), the Heartland 2050 Mini-Grant program and the FTA Section 5310 Program - Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities.

Find more information:

<http://mapacog.org/calendar/news/fy2021-call-for-projects/>

MAPA welcomes Kristina Martin



MAPA added disaster recovery to its dossier of services this past year and a staff member to assist with it.

Kristina Martin is MAPA's new Disaster Recovery Coordinator. She is from Bellevue originally and worked the past 13 years in disaster recovery services and social work. She was employed most recently by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in Denton, Texas.

Kristina has an Associate's Degree in Behavioral Science from Metropolitan Community College in Omaha and has taken several classes from FEMA's Emergency Management Institute.

She received the Oklahoma Governor's Accommodation Award for her disaster recovery work following the Moore and El Reno, Oklahoma tornadoes. She also has five case management awards from the American Red Cross, Catholic Charities and the Salvation Army.

CALENDAR

January 2020

- Jan. 1st – New Year's Day observed
MAPA offices closed
- Jan. 8th – Nebraska Legislature Convenes
RPA-18
11:00 a.m.
- Jan. 13th – Iowa Legislature Convenes
- Jan. 15th – Finance Committee
8:30 a.m.
Coordinated Transit
10:30 a.m.
- Jan. 17th – Transportation Committee
10 a.m.
- Jan. 20th – Martin Luther King Day
MAPA offices closed
- Jan. 23rd – MAPA Board of Directors
1:30 p.m.
- Jan. 25th – Chinese New Year

February 2020

- Feb. 2nd – Groundhog Day
- Feb. 3rd – Iowa Caucuses
- Feb. 7th – Regional Planning
(Heartland 2050 RPAC)
10:00 a.m.
- Feb. 9th – NARC Conference of Regions
Washington, D.C. (Feb. 9-12)
- Feb. 11th – RPA-18
11 a.m.
- Feb. 14th – Valentine's Day
- Feb. 17th – Presidents' Day
MAPA offices closed
- Feb. 19th – Finance Committee
8:30 a.m.
Coordinated Transit
10:30 a.m.
- Feb. 21st – Transportation Committee
10 a.m.
- Feb. 24th – League of NE Municipalities
Midwinter Conference
(Feb. 24-25)
- Feb. 26th – Ash Wednesday
- Feb. 27th – MAPA Board of Directors
1:30 p.m.
- Feb. 29th – NACo National Association
of Counties Legislative
Conference (Feb. 29 - Mar. 4)



Back row: Kristina Martin, Grant Anderson, Ariana Wesley-Powell, Tom Ryan, Court Barber, Margie Bell, Mike Helgersen, Jim Boerner

Middle row: Sue Cutsforth, Owen Stuckey, Josh Corrigan, Emily Sneller

Front row: Greg Youell, Travis Halm, Sarah Fixmer, Megan Walker, Jeff Spiehs, Amanda Morales, Christina Brownell, Natasha Barrett

Not Pictured: Don Gross, Karna Loewenstein, Jodi Woolery, Ryan Ossell

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