



HEARTLAND 2050 REGIONAL PLANNING ADVISORY COMMITTEE (H2050 RPAC)

Heartland 2050 is a community driven initiative pulling in stakeholders from across the region to think big and work towards a common vision for our six-county region anchored by the Omaha-Council Bluffs metro area.

MEETING MINUTES

Friday, Feb. 3, 2023 | 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

ATTENDEES: Ashley Rae Turner, Bruce Fountain, Chris Gibbons, Chris Shewchuk, Derek Miller, Heather Gamon, Jason Kubicek, Jeff Beiermann, Jeff Spiehs, Keith Station, Kent Holm, Krista Wassenaar, Leland Jacobson, Mark Sturmsma, Dr. Martha Bruckner, Meridith Dillon, Michael Jensen, Michaela Valentin, Dan Giittinger, Christine Stokes, Manne Cook, Chad Kruse, Lauren Cencic, Vicki Quaites-Ferris

GUESTS: Sam Hueser, Holly Jackson, Dustin Marvel, Moises Monrroy

MAPA STAFF: Mike Helgerson, Laura Heilman, Sue Cutsforth, Carlos Morales, Grant Anderson, Court Barber, Travis Halm, Michael Blank, Bradley Grefe, Jim Boerner, Lindsey Button, Isabelle Fleming

A. Welcome and Introductions – Keith Station, Committee Chair

B. Approve Previous Meeting Minutes - Keith Station, Committee Chair

- a. No quorum was present so no vote was taken

C. Solar Array: Solar Projects Around the Region

- a. Holly Jackson, Mills County Zoning Administrator: Mills County Solar Ordinance
 - i. MidAmerican Energy approached Mills Co. in 2022 regarding options for renewable energy but Mills County found their existing ordinances were inadequate to address the scale of that project
 1. Mills County placed a moratorium on utility-scale solar until they updated zoning ordinances to address
 2. Needed to determine:
 - a. Where should the fields be allowed
 - b. What is the maximum panel size
 - c. Who is the approval authority
 - ii. Zoning ordinance updates will address both utility-scale solar farms as well as solar panels on residences and businesses
 1. Zoning ordinances changes are currently in the approval process but are expected to be finalized soon
 - iii. Because of the prominence of agriculture in the County, a major focus of the work was the Agricultural Impact and Mitigation Plan
 1. Developed two separate seed mixtures for cover vegetation being planted under and around large-scale solar installations
 2. Created a pollinator scorecard that will be used in the permit application process for utility-scale projects
 - iv. Questions? Reach out to Holly at hjackson@millscountyiowa.gov or 712-527-4347

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- b. Sam Hueser, OPPD: Customer-Owned Generation
 - i. There has been a huge increase in projects in the last couple of years
 - ii. Visit www.OPPD.com/COG for resources and tools
 - 1. Overview of Process
 - 2. Solar Calculator - you can type in your address and see where it would be best to place solar units on your property and how much you would expect to generate at your location
 - 3. Trade Ally Program - can help you find an OPPD-approved company to install a solar panel for you!
 - a. OPPD highly-recommends using one of their partners because many companies marketing solar panels may not be familiar with local regulations
- c. Chris Gibbons, Council Bluffs: City of Council Bluffs SolSmart Designation & Zoning Updates
 - i. SolSmart is a national program that recognizes cities, counties, and communities for making it faster, easier, and more affordable to go solar
 - ii. Council Bluffs was awarded the highest designation, SolSmart Gold
 - iii. Rather than add just solar ordinances to zoning codes, CB addend a new chapter in municipal code to address solar energy and renewable energy overall
 - iv. Check out Council Bluffs' Renewable Energy Webpage at <https://www.councilbluffs-ia.gov/2460/Renewable-Energy>
 - v. Council Bluffs' solar commitment is to provide clear guidelines, overview of zoning requirements, processing applications in less than 3 business days, offering inspection appointment times for solar projects

D. RPAC Bylaws and Quorum Discussion - Keith Station, Committee Chair

- a. Discussion about changing the number of voting RPAC members needed for a quorum
- b. Will need 26 members of the committee to attend the April 7th meeting in-person to vote to change the quorum

E. MAPA Project Selection Committee Discussion - Court Barber, MAPA

- a. MAPA staff have proposed updating our transportation funding project selection process in order to increase equity in our decision-making
 - i. To accomplish action items from the Board of Directors' 2020 Equity Resolution, specifically:
 - 1. Include robust representation from communities of color in MAPA committees
 - 2. Review policies and programs to ensure equitable funding toward disinvested communities
 - 3. Address the needs of African-American and other historically disadvantaged populations in the transportation planning and project selection process
 - 4. Target priority community development and economic development investments in Racially or Ethnically Concentrated Areas of Poverty



- ii. To meet recommendations from MAPA's 2022 Federal Certification Review by FHWA and FTA who recommended increased representation by the following group in MAPA's transportation decision-making:
 - 1. Healthcare Experts
 - 2. Housing and Development Experts
 - 3. Persons with Disabilities
 - 4. Persons Under the Poverty Limit
 - 5. Equity-focused Groups and Advocates
- b. MAPA staff originally proposed creating a single Regional Funding Committee made up of representatives from the Transportation Technical Advisory Committee (TTAC), the Coordinated Transit Committee (CTC) and RPAC, instead of the four separate decision-making bodies currently making transportation funding recommendations to the MAPA Board
 - i. This proposal was voted down by TTAC in December 2022
- c. MAPA staff will continue to develop options for updating transportation funding decision-making, but will not make any changes to project selection for the upcoming project selection cycle (starting in October 2023) because there is not time to implement changes before this effort must begin
 - i. Other options include forming Independent TTAC & RPAC selection committees, diversifying members of selection committees (ProSeCom, Transportation Alternatives Program-Committee (TAP-C) and 5310 funding committee, diversifying TTAC membership, combine TTAC & RPAC
- d. MAPA staff will continue to include RPAC members in this conversation

F. Heartland 2050 Mini-Grant Project Updates:

- a. The following items were not presented due to time constraints and will be added to a future meeting agenda:
 - i. Southside Terrace: Jim Boerner, MAPA
 - ii. Neighborhood Expanded Access to Trails (NEAT): Court Barber, MAPA

G. Additional Business - Keith Station, Committee Chair

- 1. Updating Committee Members for FY 2024
 - a. RPAC members will receive an email asking them to confirm their representative for the upcoming fiscal year (July 1 2023-June 30 2024)
- 2. Committee Updates - Committee Chairs
 - a. Natural Resources - Kyle Madsen
 - i. None
 - b. Housing and Development - Jeff Spiehs
 - i. Will do strategic planning to create a two-year plan for committee work
 - c. Infrastructure - Derek Miller
 - i. Fiber presentations from Google and Allo at the upcoming April 5th meeting
 - ii. Committee has developed strong working groups to complete different projects
 - iii. One working group is supporting MAPA's Regional Broadband Coordination and statewide Digital Equity Plan development in Nebraska and Iowa
 - iv. Another working group is supporting the Thriving/Reconnecting Communities grant work focusing on what can be done to reconnect communities in North Omaha that were separated by the Hwy 75 Freeway

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- d. Equity and Engagement - Ashley Rae Turner
 - i. Equity Development Scorecard presentation to Olsson & Associates in Dec. 2022
 - ii. Looking for additional partnerships with other companies/agencies where the committee can present the scorecard

3. MAPA Updates

- a. Introduced new MAPA staff member Bradley J. Grefe, Community & Economic Development Planner
- b. Iowa RPA-13 and RPA-18 Passenger Transportation Plan Public Comment Period
 - i. Plans include goals and strategies for employer work routes, health and human service transportation, coordination with school districts
 - ii. Comment period: February 1 to March 2
 - iii. www.mapacog.org/reports/draftptp/
- c. Brownfields Workshop – Save the Date!
 - i. March 30 – 9 a.m.-4 p.m. at Nebraska Urban Indian Coalition
 - ii. Look for registration information coming out soon
- d. Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) Grant award
 - i. MAPA & the City of Omaha were awarded a \$750,000 planning grant in February 2023 to develop a regional Comprehensive Safety Action Plan
 - 1. To prevent roadway deaths and serious injuries
 - 2. Douglas & Sarpy Counties in Nebraska and Council Bluffs, Carter Lake, Crescent & McClelland in Pottawattamie County
 - ii. Projects listed in the Action Plan are eligible for additional federal SS4A implementation funding
 - iii. Look for more information from MAPA coming soon
- e. Thriving Communities program
 - i. The Thriving Communities program offers funding to close access gaps by providing targeted support to navigate federal requirements, identify funding and financing opportunities, and grow long-term capacity to leverage transportation investments to achieve broader economic and community development goals
 - ii. MAPA, the City of Omaha and SPARK submitted a letter of interest in December 2022
 - 1. Have been invited to submit a letter of commitment due February 2023
 - 2. Asking for technical assistance to collaborate and build community around the North Freeway

4. Community Updates

- a. None

Adjourn

Future Meetings & Events:

H2050 Regional Planning Advisory Committee – April 7, 2023

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