RPA-18 Policy and Technical Committees
MINUTES

In attendance:

Policy Board Voting Members
- **Charles Parkhurst** - Shelby County, Policy Board Chair
- **Richard Crouch** - Mills County
- **Susan Miller** - Pottawattamie County

Technical Board Voting Members
- **Brandon Burmeister-** Shelby County
- **Jacob Ferro** - Mills County
- **John Rasmussen** - Pottawattamie County

Non-Voting/MAPA Staff
- **Travis Halm -** MAPA
- **Lindsey Button** - MAPA
- **Carlos Morales -** MAPA
- **Laura Heilman -** MAPA
- **Gene Gettys** - City of Harlan**

*Attended virtually
** Gene Gettys attended virtually and elected not to vote today to prevent usage of RPA-18s virtual meeting allocations

Charles Parkhurst called the meeting to order at 11:00am.

Action Items

1. **Approval of the Agenda**

    No changes were made to the agenda. Parkhurst called for approval of the agenda.

    Technical: Rasmussen motioned to recommend the Policy Board approve the Agenda. Motion was seconded by Burmeister. Motion passed.

    Policy: Miller motioned to approve the technical committee recommendation. Crouch seconded the motion. Motion passed.

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

    Rasmussen was in attendance at the July 12th meeting and this is not reflected in the attendance list in the minutes. Parkhurst called for approval of the minutes pending this correction.

    Technical: Burmeister motioned to recommend the Policy Board approvel the minutes pending corrections as outlined above. Motion was seconded by Ferro. Motion passed.

    Policy: Crouch motioned to approve the technical committee recommendation. Miller seconded the motion. Motion passed.

MAPA
Omaha - Council Bluffs
Metropolitan Area
Planning Agency

3. **Public Participation Plan (PPP) Approval.**

Heilman presented on the MAPA Public Participation Plan update. This plan outlines how MAPA will work to achieve public participation for regional planning and programming efforts and was presented to the committee in draft form on July 12 . This includes all work conducted under MAPA and RPA-18.

Heilman provided a print out of the executive summary to all members present. The draft document is now available on the MAPA website.

This document is updated every 5 years. This update included

- Efforts made to simplify and clarify the document
- Added an executive summary for quick reference for staff and public
- Added language about virtual engagement
- Added a 5% threshold for language translation (materials will be provided in other languages if 5% or more within a project area speak a language other than English)

Substantive updates made since the draft document was presented to RPA-18 included:

- Updated the public notice accommodation policy statement to be more robust
- Added a list of MAPA's Outreach Channels to the body of the document
- Added general definitions for administrative modifications and amendments
- Added tables to the Public involvement in Major Planning Activities section for the Civil Rights Policy, Community Development Work Program, and RPA-18 work products.
- Updated public participation evaluation criteria and performance goals to provide more clarity
- Updated all contact information in Appendix C: Resources agencies and interested parties
- Added Appendix D: Public involvement…

This document is required by both MAPA and RPA-18.

Rasmussen asked for clarification on the difference between the MAPA foundation and the TMA. Heilman - foundation is only in Nebraska, while the RPA region is solely in Iowa.

Morales - MAPA has several geographies including the Council of Governments, the TMA, the RPA-18. The work done in these meetings is exclusively pertaining to the Iowa / RPA-18 side, but MAPA also serves a much larger area.

Halm noted that the main updates to the plan for RPA-18 included an update to public comment period requirements for TIP and Project selection, the TPWP, and the LRTP & PTP. These periods are outlined in the document. MAPA has historically used 30 day comment periods, however, there is not alway 30 days between meetings, or 30 days between when the draft TIP can be completed and when the final TIP is due, so these changes have been made to account for these challenges. Presented timelines represent the minimum time required. Opportunity exists for extended public comment periods as the opportunity presents itself.

This plan has been approved by the MAPA board. Federal, state and local partners were contacted, with no comments or changes requested.

Technical Committee: Ferro made a motion to recommend that the Policy Board approve the Public Participation Plan. Motion was seconded by Rasmussen. Motion passed.

No further discussion.

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

4. **FY 2025 RPA-18 Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) and Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) Call for Projects.**

Halm presented the proposed timeline for the FY 2025 call for projects for STBG and TAP. There are currently $798,000 available in FY2028. $2,270,000 has been illustratively approved for Pottawattamie County based on project selection from last year. Three projects are currently in the queue for FY 2024 (Pottawattamie Trail, East Sharp Trail, and Mills Co. Trail). Iowa DOT has stated we need to program and get projects completed more promptly. We are hoping for the currently queued projects to let in September of 2024. There are currently no TAP projects programmed for FY 2025, 2026, or 2027. This is concerning, and we need to ensure we program projects into these years.

Ferro noted that the handout indicated Mills County was responsible for the East Sharp Trail. This is not the case. This project is led by the Mills County Trail Board (?). The program will be updated accordingly.

New TAP Guidance provided by Iowa DOT has indicated that project scoring myst go through a competitive process, with an added emphasis placed on "high need" areas. Halm presented a handout of proposed project selection scoring criteria. Funding can be spent earlier if it is through DOT approval. MAPA anticipates having more information on this option from Iowa DOT by the RPA meeting in November.

Rasmussen - can you reach out to the current grant holders and get an update on project timelines.

Halm - if any project requires additional funding there is a threshold under which a lead agency must reapply, but the board always entertains

Rasmussen - last time we had discussed reviewing the funding available to prevent bringing in new projects in the accomplishment years. How are we balancing that to allow for larger projects?

Halm - this is at the discretion of the RPA-18 board. Part of allowing for public comment period is to allow the public to comment. The board is in agreement that smaller projects are not worth being federally funded

Rasmussen requested a look at the regional equity tool to assess current funding available for all counties. Button stressed that while we can use this tool as a base line or target, we need to ensure that we are not allocating funding to the counties as Iowa DOT has specified that we are not permitted

to suballocate STBG or TAP funds amongst the counties and must select projects in a competitive process.

Halm noted that the regional equity tool is likely the source of funding smaller projects

Morales noted that we are at a bit of an impass. Due to the limited amount of funding that is currently available during these funding streams, larger projects may not be best suited to these funding streams. MAPA is pivoting to work on assisting RPA counties in applying for discretionary funding and alternative funding streams that may allow for leveraging opportunities across the region. Rasmussen asked for a year's balance and a year's allocation before opening the call for projects. Doing the call for projects when there's no balance for larger projects may not be worthwhile.

Button indicated that the TMA side is only doing a call for projects every other year, and this could be an option for the RPA as well, and allow the fund to build up and fund larger projects if that is the goal and priority indicated by the RPA board. However, caution should be used with regards to TAP funding as we don't currently have many projects programmed there.

Morales - in order to fund larger projects, we need to get through NEPA. The further we are in the NEPA process, the easier it is to be competitive for discretionary funding programs. These regional STBG funds could potentially be used to fund NEPA, in order to pursue discretionary funding.

Halm advised that the RPA open a call for projects for both STBG and TAP, noting that if there is apprehension on funding smaller STBG projects. Halm also expressed concern about building funds for projects that may have increased costs. Burmeister expressed interest in calling TAP but not STBG.

Burmeister - if we did do a call for projects I would like to see them just for 2028. It's not fair to fund small projects in the accomplishment year when someone is trying to save funds for larger projects.

Crouch - is this going to open this up to everyone in all counties? Cities etc. Halm - yes. Whoever is eligible for STBG can apply. This includes counties and cities for certain roadways - collector and above federally classified roadways. Crouch - I'm not saying we shouldn't know what's going on for projects, if we had a year where we didn't open the call for projects to allow for funds to build up that's not a bad idea. We have been doing this for 20 years and it hasn't worked yet. Rasmussen - when we open the call can we specify the funding year? Halm - No, it's a 25-28 call. However, you don't have to program something in 25. We can set up scoring for projects, and then the committee can use their discretion to determine which projects should be funded and which should not.

Technical Committee: Rasmussen made a motion to recommend the Policy Board to open the call for projects for the RPA-18 STBG and TAP grant programs. Motion was seconded by Burmeister. Motion passed.

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

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

Rasmussen requested an update to the regional equity spreadsheet and it's distribution to the committee / board.

5. **FY 2024 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Amendment.**

Halm briefly presented the updated Statewide TAP criteria. The proposed amendment would add these criteria to the FY 2024 TIP.

Rasmussen asked for clarification on the local bridge program. Halm noted that this was not amended into the TIP. Halm noted that the bridge portion is also on the page and no changes were made to the bridge program.

Technical Committee: Burmeister made a motion to recommend the Policy Board to open the call for projects for the RPA-18 STBG and TAP grant programs. Motion was seconded by Rasmussen. Motion passed.

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

Discussion Items

6. **State Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) Funding.**

Halm presented the updated Statewide TAP criteria. TAP was not procured last year due to the way the IIJA was written, requiring additional time to determine how RPA funding is allocated. There is now both a Statewide TAP program, and a Regional TAP program. The goal of the Statewide TAP is the expansion of the multimodal trail network emphasizing the completion of trail linkage. There is new criteria and scoring that focuses on Safe Routes to School.

State TAP applications are due November 27th, 2023, and require a resolution from your governing body or board. MAPA encourages members to ask questions as necessary, and if you plan to apply to Regional TAP, to also apply for State TAP.

Ferro mentioned that the City of Malvern had one TAP project that may be appropriate for this State TAP application process.

7. **RPA-18 Long Range Transportation Plan Update (LRTP)**

Halm presented the RPA-18 LRTP. The LRTP provides direction and guidance for each RPA/MPO to make efficient transportation investment over a 20-year planning horizon. This plan is updated every 5 years, and conducts an inventory and goal-setting process for Long Range Transportation within the region. This document is meant to guide the selection process for STBG and TAP, and guide and reflect other local planning efforts. Projects living in the LRTP are also more competitive for discretionary funding programs. Halm presented the proposed timeline for the LRTP update. Recommendations for the 2025 update, goals from the previous plan.

Halm asked for the board opinions on the goals from the previous plan and if anything has changed since the last plan. Rasmussen raised the concern over rail bridges and solutions regarding overpass replacement. Railroad owns the bridges, and are unable to acquire federal funding for replacements, and neither can the Counties. Halm noted the current railroad crossing elimination program, and that including that concern in the plan would help make applications more competitive.

Morales asked about 2019 floods and asked if adjustments need to be made in light of these infrastructure needs. What are the major concerns that you're hearing about? The Winneshiek SS4A plan for all Iowa counties will also open up funding for safety projects.

Halm/Button noted that no decisions need to be made today, this topic is more to get the plan on the radar and get committee members to start thinking about these questions.

Halm asked about public involvement in this plan. The last update included a presentation to the four county commissions and three city councils. The goal for 2024 would be to use this as a baseline, and enhance outreach to constituents through a variety of outreach options. Halm opened the floor for discussion on effective outreach methods to constituents.

Gettys noted that providing an opportunity to engage through online surveys with some targeted questions, while keeping it simple. Delivering a 40 page plan to constituents and asking for comments will be unsuccessful, but if there is a short targeted survey, this may get some engagement. Getting people to meetings now is severely lacking.

For this update MAPA recommends providing more substantive strategies based upon inventory and goals, with increased correlation to other plans and initiatives. Halm posed to the committees; How can this document help guide local jurisdictions in their work, What areas are we not covering that should be covered, and How do you think we can best reach constituents in your jurisdictions?

Halm posed three questions to the committee/board for them to think on for the next meeting.

Rasmussen noted that it was worth turning this around and asking rather how this document can guide regional efforts, how the document can support regional efforts.

8. **Additional Business and Public Comment**

Summer traffic counts - please reach out to Jim Boerner if there are any new roads or bridges that may not have been included in state bridge monitoring. MAPA is aiming to make sure they are not double counting in locations where members have projects and have recent data already that could be shared. Morales noted that MAPA could request that the Iowa DOT send someone to this meeting to explain the program in more detail. Next opportunity is in 2024, and the next count won't occur until 2028.

Pottawattamie County hasn't been counted since 2016.

Upcoming meetings:
- November 8, 2023 - Virtual - meet to go over applications with potential applicants
- January 26, 2024 - STBG and TAP applications are due
- March 13, 2023 - Project Selection Meeting (Anticipated)

Crouch motioned to adjourn the meeting at 12:05. Motion was seconded by Miller and approved unanimously.