

# MOVING FORWARD



Nebraska's Cowboy Trail | Photo courtesy Visit Norfolk Area Nebraska2

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## Iowa and Nebraska making progress on Great American Rail-Trail

Iowa and Nebraska are making progress in completing the portions of Great American Rail-Trail which cross their states. The Great American Rail-Trail will be the first cross-country multi-use trail in the United States, with plans to span more than 3,700 miles from Washington, D.C. to Washington State.

Kevin Belle, project manager of the Great American Rail-Trail, spoke about efforts to complete the trail at MAPA's Council of Officials Annual Meeting on October 9th in Council Bluffs.

respectively. He said the conversation about trails has changed in the past several years.

Belle pointed to a study by Headwaters Economics which demonstrates the economic impact a trail like the Great American Rail-Trail can have on communities. That study says that once the portions of the Great American Rail-Trail in Iowa and Nebraska are completed they will bring approximately \$14.5 million in new annual visitor spending to each state.

Belle lauded the City of Council Bluffs for transforming a former Chicago and North western Railroad spur into the FIRST AVE trail. He said the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, at the urging of the City of Council Bluffs, changed the Great American Rail-Trail route to go through the city instead of around it because of the FIRST AVE trail.

There are 81 gaps remaining in the trail and Belle said he is encouraged by progress to close the last gap in the Mo-Pac trail between Lincoln and Omaha. "I can't emphasize enough



Kevin Belle, Project Manager of the Great American Rail-Trail

Belle said in Iowa and Nebraska, the trail is 53% and 52% completed

*continued on page 2*





## Input sought for Long Range Transportation Plan surveys

MAPA is updating its 2050 Long Range Transportation Plan and the Regional Planning Affiliation (RPA)-18 Long Range Transportation Plan and is looking for public input through two surveys.

The 2050 Long Range Transportation Plan is a comprehensive plan projecting the transportation needs for the Omaha-Council Bluffs metro area (Douglas, Sarpy and western Pottawattamie Counties) for the next 25 years, while the RPA-18 2050 Long Range Transportation Plan projects transportation needs in Harrison, Shelby and Mills Counties and the rural portion of Pottawattamie County.

Projects must be listed in long range transportation plans to be eligible for federal funding. The plans are updated every five years. Public input from the surveys will help inform the 2025 updates for both Long Range Transportation Plans.

Take the 2050 LRTP survey:  
[lrtp-2050-update.mapacog.org](http://lrtp-2050-update.mapacog.org).

Take the RPA 2050 LRTP survey:  
[tinyurl.com/RPA18Survey](http://tinyurl.com/RPA18Survey).

Both plans will be published in late 2025.

*continued from Iowa and Nebraska making progress on the Great American Rail-Trail*

how transformative it is to connect your two major cities in a state by trail," said Belle.

For communities that want to pursue building a trail, the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy has resources and tools to support those efforts. Find more information on the organization's website: [www.railstotrails.org](http://www.railstotrails.org).

Find out more about the Great American Rail-Trail and view interactive maps at [www.railstotrails.org/site/greatamericanrailtrail/](http://www.railstotrails.org/site/greatamericanrailtrail/)

## Safe Streets for All project seeks leadership commitment

In early September, MAPA began hosting meetings with community leaders to secure their commitment to the Safe Streets for All project, which aims to reduce traffic fatalities and serious injuries to zero by 2040.

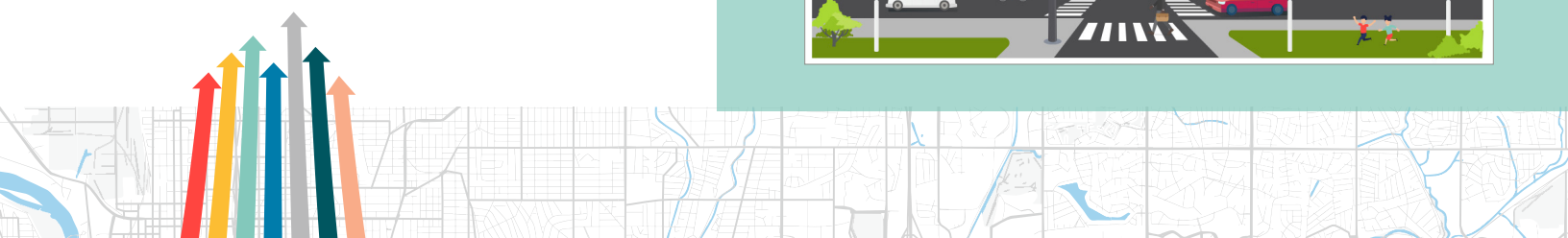


The project team met with many of the member jurisdiction public works, planning, and law enforcement staff to better understand the communities' existing safety policies and procedures and areas they feel could benefit from the regional Safe Streets for All planning.

This input will be included within the Comprehensive Safety Action Plan, planned for approval in the spring of 2025. Sixteen communities have contributed to date.

Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) is a competitive grant program through the U.S. Department of Transportation, providing \$5 billion dollars over five years to improve traffic safety by supporting local communities in the development of safety action plans and the implementation of projects which reduce traffic fatalities and serious injuries on the local road network. The plan includes Douglas and Sarpy Counties in Nebraska, plus the cities of Council Bluffs, Carter Lake, Crescent and McClelland in Iowa.

Help inform the plan and take MAPA's community input survey: [mapacog.org/projects/ss4a](http://mapacog.org/projects/ss4a).



## MAPA presents its 2024 Annual Awards at Council of Officials Annual Meeting

A county agency whose mission is to provide meaningful experiences with the county's unique natural resources for people of all ages and a suburban mayor helping her community navigate times of unprecedented growth were recognized at MAPA's Council of Officials Annual Meeting October 9th in Council Bluffs.



Pottawattamie Conservation received MAPA's 2024 Regional Service Award. Mayor Cindy Grove of Valley, Nebraska, received MAPA's 2024 Regional Citizenship Award.

Mayor Grove has demonstrated strong leadership during times of rapid growth and change in the region. Her instrumental role in initiatives such as Valley's Community Collaboration Group, Comprehensive Community Needs Assessment and the Western Douglas County Planning Collaborative have had a profound impact on the well-being of the MAPA region.

Pottawattamie Conservation, with support from the Pottawattamie County Board of Supervisors, has demonstrated exemplary leadership in the conservation of unique natural resources and contributed to regionally significant recreational facilities.



"The development of the Lewis & Clark Trail, the sustainable design of Heartwood Pavilion at Hitchcock Nature Center and the enhancement of the Mt. Crescent Ski Area have increased access to high-quality public land and recreational opportunities in the MAPA region," said Mike Helgerson, MAPA Executive Director.

Interviews with both Pottawattamie Conservation Executive Director Jeff Franco and Valley Mayor Cindy Grove can be found on MAPA's YouTube page: [youtube.com/@MAPA2222](https://youtube.com/@MAPA2222).

## Platte River Bridge Trail Opens

The new Platte River Bridge Trail along US Highway 34/75 connecting Sarpy and Cass Counties is a key example of regional collaboration.

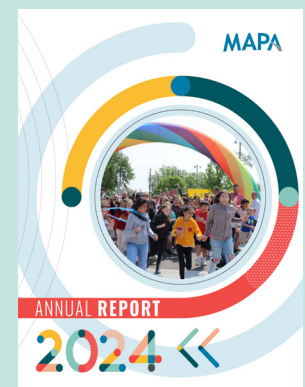
MAPA convened partners and orchestrated a massive infrastructure agreement to swap state for federal funding to build the bridge and create pedestrian and bicycle access.

The new trail, which opened Aug. 3, provides greater safety to bridge users and increased recreational opportunities for trail users by providing a connection across the Platte River between Sarpy County and Cass County and a key connection in the regional trail network.



## MAPA publishes its 2024 Annual Report

MAPA has published its 2024 Annual Report. The annual report is a visual showcase of the work the agency performs on behalf of its regional partners and member communities.



This year's report is a vibrant display of MAPA's diverse work on behalf of its regional partners and member communities. It also marks the 10th anniversary of Heartland 2050 with a special timeline showcasing accomplishments of the last 10 years.

View the MAPA 2024 Annual Report: [mapacog.org/reports/2024-annual-report](https://mapacog.org/reports/2024-annual-report).



## 2025 MAPA Calendar available

MAPA's 2025 calendars are here to help you plan your schedule in the upcoming year. Calendars are provided free of charge and are available for pick up at MAPA offices.

Reserve yours by emailing [mapa@mapacog.org](mailto:mapa@mapacog.org) or by calling 402-444-6866.



# CALENDAR

## NOVEMBER 2024

- 11** **Veterans Day**  
*MAPA Offices Closed*
- 13** **RPA-18**  
11:00 a.m.
- 28** **Thanksgiving Day**  
*MAPA Offices Closed*
- 29** **Thanksgiving Friday**  
*MAPA Offices Closed*

## DECEMBER 2024

- 04** **Finance Committee**  
8:30 a.m.
- 06** **Transportation Technical Advisory Committee**  
**Regional Planning Advisory Committee**  
10:00 a.m.
- 11** **RPA-18**  
11:00 a.m.  
**Council of Officials Quarterly Meeting**
- 12** **MAPA Board of Directors**  
1:30 p.m.
- 18** **Coordinated Transit Committee**  
10:30 a.m.
- 24** **Christmas Eve**  
*MAPA Offices Close at 12:00 p.m.*
- 25** **Christmas Day**  
*MAPA Offices Closed*

## Omaha launches survey for its Comprehensive Plan

Omaha is developing a new comprehensive plan, the first update in nearly 30 years, and the City is seeking public opinion to inform the plan through a survey.

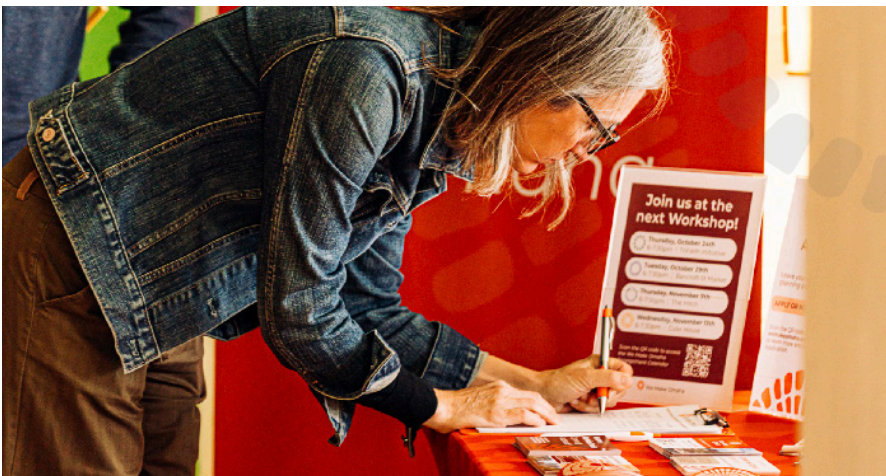


We Make Omaha

A comprehensive plan outlines a community's vision, goals, and policies for its future growth and development.

It informs decisions about land use, zoning, and code, which determine how and where cities grow.

Access the survey for Omaha's Comprehensive Plan at [wemake.omaha.gov](http://wemake.omaha.gov).



U.S. Department of Transportation  
**Federal Highway Administration**

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